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MADAME DE MAINTENON

BY
EMILY BOWLES

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PREFACE.

EARLY in last year (as Mr. Oxenham pointed out in an able article in the April number of the *National Review*), Dr. Döllinger gave a remarkable lecture at Munich on Madame de Maintenon as “the most influential woman in French History.” And yet, as every one knows, French history, and especially the history of the seventeenth century, in which she lived, absolutely bristles with influential and distinguished women. Nor is Dr. Döllinger in any way given to indiscriminate admiration or uncritical praise.

During last year also M. A. Geffroy published in Paris two admirable volumes of selected letters and conversations of Madame de Maintenon, annotated with great care, and throwing much valuable light upon the calumnies to which she has been subjected, as well as upon her real character and motives.

The volume now published—much delayed by an interval of great sorrow—was undertaken three years ago with the same object of representing Madame de Maintenon

as she really was, and thus allowing her to vindicate herself from the slanders principally perpetuated by St. Simon and the Duchess of Orleans. It seems almost impossible now to believe that it is only comparatively of late years that Madame de Maintenon has been credited with her genuine marriage with Louis XIV., or has even been cleared from the imputation of beginning her career as the mistress of Scarron.

The general impression of her, in fact, has been rather that of a woman who largely, though demurely, sowed her wild oats while she could, and when that pleasant condition of existence was no longer possible, turned to the opposing excitements of religious fanaticism, and became a *femme dévote*, jealously and equally bent upon preserving her position at Court and "making her soul."

Of the unique, wide-spreading influence of Madame de Maintenon there can be no historical doubt, but what has chiefly been sought to represent now is that character which was summed up in speaking of her by a man not much her friend, the Regent Orleans, "*Elle a fait du bien à tout le monde tant qu'elle a pu, et n'a jamais fait tort à personne.*"

It is not necessary to embody in this volume any account of the complicated wars of Louis XIV., but it may be well to note certain dates as landmarks to the letters. Beginning in 1665, when Louis laid claim to Brabant, and an alliance was made between England, Holland, and Sweden, till the Treaty of Nimeguen in 1678, incessant successful wars brought France to be the first power in

Europe. From 1678 to 1685, the date of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Louis XIV. reigned undisputed as the greatest monarch of his age. A league was formed by Spain, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Savoy, and at last England, against him, when the consequent wars were concluded by the Peace of Ryswick in 1697. In 1701, the War of the Spanish Succession broke out, which lasted for ten years.

Louis XIV. and the Emperor Leopold of Germany, both grandsons of Philip III. of Spain, had both also married daughters of Philip IV. Charles II. of Spain had no children, and in 1701 a will was made, naming the Duke of Anjou, second son of the Dauphin of France and grandson of Louis XIV., heir to the Spanish crown. Louis himself, and England and Holland, at first acknowledged Philip V. of Spain, but the two latter Powers soon joined a treaty with the Emperor Leopold, under the title of the "Grand Alliance." The succeeding victories of Marlborough and Prince Eugène reduced France to the greatest distress, and after Louis XIV. had twice before (1706 and 1709) offered the most honourable terms of peace, and the claimant of the Spanish crown having become Emperor of Germany, the war was ended by the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht, 1713. By that treaty Philip V. was acknowledged in Spain, and Louis XIV., abandoning the Stuarts, recognized the settlement of the English crown.

The authorities consulted are these :—

1. "La Famille d'Aubigné et l'Enfance de Madame de Maintenon suivi des Mémoires Inédits de Languet de

Gergy, Archevêque de Sens, sur Madame de Maintenon et la Cour de Louis XIV." *Lavallée*.

2. " Histoire de la Maison Royale de Saint Cyr, 1686-1793." *Lavallée*.

3. " Histoire de Madame de Maintenon et des Principaux Événements du Règne de Louis XIV." *M. le Duc de Noailles*.

4. " Madame de Maintenon d'après sa Correspondance Authentique. Choix de ses Lettres et Entretiens." *A. Geffroy*, Membre de l'Institut.

It may be allowed, perhaps, here to acknowledge, in regard to this last, the kindness and never-failing courtesy of M. Gustave Masson, who contributed the unpublished letters from the British Museum to M. Geffroy's excellent collection.

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MADAME DE MAINTENON.



CHAPTER I.

1550—1630.

AMONG the little known regions of the vast extent of France, perhaps even less known than the great delta of the Rhone, with its lagoons and salt marshes, there is a strange tract of country lying on the western coast of Poitou, formed by the rivers Sèvre and La Vendée, with their affluents, and still called the "Marais." As in Holland, this wide tract of monotonous dreariness is cut and slashed by numberless dykes, canals, and fosses, which have come to be the natural roads of the country. From field to field, from island to island, the inhabitants have gone about their business in boats, and by degrees the whole district has been made fertile in grain and green crops and rich pasture.

One of the largest and most remarkable of these islands of the Marais is the Île de Maillezais, which lies farthest from the sea, and nearest to the drier regions of Poitou known as "the Plain." The Île de Maillezais is reached by a good road from Fontenay, passing through the

hamlet of Port de l'Île, once strongly fortified, and where the remains of towers and a drawbridge are still to be seen.

On the highest ridge of Maillezais stand the ruins of the magnificent abbey, founded in the eighth and rebuilt with great splendour in the fourteenth century, within which the counts of Poitou had their burial-place. Like many of the abbeys and churches in France, it became a strongly fortified military position, and any traveller, approaching it from Fontenay, is struck with admiration at the desolate grandeur of the vast tower and walls standing out against the sky, and seeming to defy the ravages of men and time.

The abbey was sacked and burnt by the Huguenots during the wars of the League, leaving only parts of the transept and magnificent towers, the refectory, now used as a farmhouse, and the vaulted room that is said to have been the library of the most famous of the lords of Maillezais, Agrippa d'Aubigné.

This remarkable man was so thoroughly the growth of his times, and so fully represents the conflicting and chaotic state of France under the last Valois kings, that it is instructive to follow the details of his strange career.

Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné, who derived his strange name—*quasi ægri partus* *—from the fact that his birth cost his mother her life, was born at St. Maury, in Saintonge, in the year 1550.† The family was first known in Anjou, and spread from there into Poitou and Guienne. In the year 1160, Geoffroy d'Aubigné, or d'Aubigny, was lord of Aubigné, near Saumur, and held the rank of knight. Agrippa's mother being dead, his father married again, and

* De Noailles, "Mémoires."

† Or 1552.

as his step-mother took a dislike to him, he was sent away from home to be educated.

The early years of his life certainly did not smile on this boy, who yet became one of the most remarkable and distinctive men of his age. At five, he was put under a harsh, stern master, who forced him into the absurd *curriculum* of the College of France at that time,* which was to study Latin, Greek, and Hebrew all at once. At six years old, Agrippa could read in four languages, and at seven and a half was construing Plato, so that his father was able to enter him at the University of Paris to "finish his studies" at ten years old. At that famous university, the resort of the most able and turbulent spirits of the time from all corners of Europe, this precocious, keen-witted, and hardened boy soon became another element of marked disturbance. He threw himself at once into the thick of the conflicting religious discussions, and was enlisted by his stern Huguenot father on the Calvinist side.

One day, when the father and son were riding together under the walls of Amboise, on which the heads of the Huguenots engaged in the "Conspiracy of Amboise" were bleaching on pikes, the elder d'Aubigné indignantly exclaimed, "Butchers! They have beheaded France!" Laying his hand on Agrippa's head, he added, "My son, you must not spare your own head, next to mine, to avenge these honourable chiefs. If you spare yourself in this matter, my curse rest on you!"

A number of people, who were grouped about and heard the seditious words, rushed upon them, and the two d'Aubignés only saved themselves by spurring their horses

* Founded by Francis I., 1530.

sharply through the crowd. Agrippa laid up these words of his father's, and fully carried out his wishes. At Paris, he was put under a famous Italian, Beroaldi, full of learning, but suspected of heretical opinions. In fact, he was soon afterwards on that account forced to fly from Paris, taking the boy Agrippa and some others with him. The party were all tracked to Coutances, where they were arrested and imprisoned; but Agrippa's only grief in the matter was that he lost his little sword and a sword-belt with silver chains.

The officers who had arrested the party were so sorry to see this mere child in prison, that they carried him off to the captain's room, where, however, he was brutally told that his companions would be burnt at the stake. Agrippa boldly made answer that his horror of the Mass was far greater than his dread of any stake or burning.

It was a strange scene, well worth painting. At the end of the room, two men were playing on the violin, while some of the officers danced; and after a while the captain, whose name, Dachon, has been preserved, ordered Agrippa also to stand up and dance a galliard, which the boy did, so gracefully as to be loudly applauded by the officers.

Then the ecclesiastical inquisitor broke in upon the party, and ordered the boy, with angry and cruel abuse, to be taken back to the prison cells. Agrippa and his companions, however, soon afterwards escaped by connivance from the cells, and took refuge with the widowed Duchess of Ferrara, Renée d'Este,* whose Calvinist opinions had banished her from Italy, and she was now living at Montargis. From there, Agrippa was passed on to Orleans,

* Daughter of Louis XII. of France; married Hercules d'Este.

where his father held some post, and where the boy fell ill with the "plague"—a malignant fever with which France was much scourged at that time. Agrippa had no sooner recovered than he rushed into all the disorderly licence of the garrison, and, his father soon afterwards dying, he was sent by his guardian to a school at Geneva, for he was still only a boy of fourteen. But Geneva was then a very hotbed of Calvinism, the "holy city" of the reform party, and Agrippa's fiery partisanship soon attracted the notice of Theodore Beza, who, nevertheless, roundly rebuked him for his vicious life. Agrippa was too unruly to bear the slightest reproof, and soon made his escape from his tutor's house, and went to Lyons, where he applied himself seriously to study; but, giving way at the same time to his unbridled curiosity, he took up between whiles the books of magic or sorcery, as the subject was developed in the Middle Ages. After thus meddling with forbidden subjects, he became so wretched, that he made several attempts to shorten his own life; and one day, wandering out to end his brief, unbridled career by drowning himself in the Saône, he met a relation who had been sent by the Calvinists on a mission to Geneva, and Agrippa was thus unexpectedly saved.

He even went back of his own accord to his former tutor; but as this master saw that Agrippa was past control, and vehemently insisted on going into the army, he unwisely kept him in strict confinement in his room, even taking away his clothes and shoes every night. But when the "Third Civil War" between the League and the Huguenots broke out in 1569, men were again aflame with passion and unbridled licence in what they called the cause

of religion, and there was very little difference, if any, between the acts of Catholics and Calvinists in the cruel outrages committed.

A number of wild, half-grown young men of d'Aubigné's acquaintance were setting out to join the Huguenot bands, and, at his vehement appeal, they agreed to give him notice by letting off an arquebuse in front of his tutor's house as they passed by to their place of mutiny. Hearing this shot one night soon afterwards as he lay in bed, Agrippa jumped up, knotted up his bedding into cords, and let himself down into the street, when he began to run as fast as he could, in his shirt and barefoot, after the vanishing troop. The captain of the band was amazed to see the white figure racing after them, and, finding that his feet were cut and bleeding from the stones, rebuked him roundly, but at last took him up behind him on his own horse, and gave him his cloak to sit on.

As soon as the troop had reached their meeting-place, the officers decided to send Agrippa back; but he hid himself, and managed to escape, and soon afterwards made his first campaign under Asnières, having thus thrown himself headlong into the civil war on the Huguenot side. D'Aubigné fought in the fierce assault on Angoulême, at Pons, Jarnac, and what is known as the "skirmish of Roche-la-Belle" in 1569. Glorifying even above his wild comrades in the unbridled savagery, the burnings, pillage, and atrocious outrages on women and children of that hideous time, Agrippa spent whole days and nights in the saddle and under arms, verifying to the full the common saying that "there was nothing too hot or too cold for him." In this life of unceasing bloodshed and cruelty he

“neither stinted nor stayed” till the end of the war in 1570.

When peace was then made, or rather a truce of utter weariness, d'Aubigné found that all his plunder and the fruits of unjust extortion had, as usual with such gains, run through his hands, and that the whole of his worldly possessions was one bond upon his own property in the Landes, which his tutor had given him to keep.

With this bond he started, and got as far as Blois, to prove his ownership of this property, when he learnt that some followers of the Duc de Longueville had seized the lands, and had witnessed by oath that d'Aubigné had been killed in a skirmish at Savignac. He could not find a single witness to his own identity, his relations turned their backs upon him on the ground of his Huguenot opinions, and, in a kind of despair, he embarked in a boat, and was carried more dead than alive to Orleans, where he suddenly appeared in the court of justice, and asked leave to plead his own cause and prove that he was himself.

A strange scene then took place, for Agrippa pleaded with such passionate energy and touching earnestness for the possession of his rights, that the judges sprang to their feet with one accord, and exclaimed, “There is no man living who could speak like that but old d'Aubigné's son!” They granted his plea, and confirmed the bond on his own property, so that he stood at last on firm ground.

It was characteristic of the man that, being now at leisure to feel, he attached himself firmly to a girl above him in position, named Diana Salviati, and then for the first time proved that his early culture had not been rooted

up by his rough soldier's life. Out of the stern crust of granite and ironstone, blossoms and verdure suddenly put forth, and Agrippa surprised the world by a series of verses that were appropriately called "d'Aubigné's Springtide."*

Just at this critical moment of his life d'Aubigné had an extraordinary escape. He had gone to Paris to receive his commission from the King of Navarre† that he might serve at Mons (1572), and, with his usual insolence, had provoked a quarrel with two gentlemen, and received a challenge from each. Being liable on this account to arrest, Agrippa fled in haste from Paris, and thus narrowly escaped the horrors of St. Bartholomew's Day.‡

That atrocious massacre gave the key-note to numberless other cruelties towards the Huguenots throughout France; and while he was hiding in various obscure towns, Agrippa went in constant peril of his life. During one of these intervals, he was living concealed by Diana Salviati's father, and the old man reminded him of his having papers in his possession that would compromise the celebrated Chancellor l'Hôpital of having been concerned in the Conspiracy of Amboise, and, with true Italian craft, he suggested that they might be made use of to obtain money before they were given up. Agrippa answered him never a word, but went to his own room, and fetched thence an old velvet bag, full of papers, which he took out and held up before Salviati's eyes, and then threw into the fire, taking care that even the least fragment should be burnt to ashes. Salviati abused him fiercely for throwing away

* "Le printemps d'Aubigné."

† Afterwards Henri IV.

‡ Henry of Navarre had gone to Paris to marry Marguerite de Valois, sister to Charles IX., August 18th, and the massacre took place August 24th.

such a chance of securing money, when Agrippa made an answer that showed what true faith and a certain grandeur of honour lay under his wild life and many vices :

“ I have burnt the papers lest they should burn me. For I might have given in to the temptation.”

Salviati was so struck and roused by this magnanimity, that he then and there promised Agrippa that Diana should be his wife ; but the girl's other relations broke off the marriage on account of d'Aubigné's Huguenot opinions

One of the most singular features of that wild, surging, chaotic time was the fashion of suddenly changing sides. Almost immediately after Agrippa had been wading in bloodshed with the Huguenot army, he returned to Paris and became the constant companion of the Duc de Guise as well as of Henry of Navarre, who had always shown a great liking for the witty and outspoken soldier. For the amusement of these two d'Aubigné put forth all his resources, and wrote for them poems, satires, ballets, and plays, among which a kind of tragic opera, called “ *Circe*,” was acted at the marriage of the Duc de Joyeuse.

The aspect of that city of marvels, Paris, was very marvellous at that moment. The blood-stains of St. Bartholomew's Day were scarcely dried in the streets, and men were “ everywhere ready to cut each other's throats, going about with mail-shirts under their clothes, and with knives and daggers in their hands.”* Yet the Court was never gayer with masques and revels and brilliant, fantastic dances, and men behaved with a reckless mirth and wild, passionate licence that seemed born of Italy rather than of France. D'Aubigné, in his own person, was a full

* Letter of the King of Navarre : de Noailles, “ *Mémoires*.”

illustration of the time, being poet, historian, satirist, theologian, and plundering free-lance all in one, and bearing himself in the Court of Henry IV. with the peculiar fascination and sway of the great *frondeurs* of the Valois reigns.

It was well for Agrippa that he succeeded in marrying at last (1583) a Mademoiselle de Lezay, who owned property in Poitou ; and after the marriage (1588) he took possession of the little town and castle of Maillezais, where he said he would rest from his toils and live in peace.

But in 1593, Henry of Navarre, then Henri IV., formally abjured Calvinism, and became reconciled to the Church, a most bitter blow to d'Aubigné and the other Huguenot leaders, who seldom afterwards saw their former master. And when Henri IV. had been murdered by Ravallac, Louis XIII. took such strong measures against the Huguenots, and so filled Poitou with troops, that d'Aubigné found it safer to fly. He left the strong castle of Maillezais, where he had really lived peacefully for some years, and took refuge at Geneva, where he bought a property called Crest. His first wife, Suzanne de Lezay, had been dead some time ; and at Geneva, when he was seventy-three years old, d'Aubigné married a young widow named Renée Burlamacchi, an Italian exiled on account of her religious opinions, with whom he lived happily for seven years. At the age of eighty, the old *frondeur* died, and was buried at Geneva, where his tomb is to be seen at this day.

From this second marriage the present family of Swiss d'Aubignés descend.

CHAPTER II.

1585—1649-50.*

THE eldest son of Suzanne de Lezay was named Constant ; and as it is with his children only that we have to do, we must look back awhile to the details of his sad life. He was most carefully educated by his father, who hoped to see his son reward him by the success of his brilliant talents ; but from his earliest years Constant fell into bad company, showed vicious tendencies, and then made an unfortunate marriage. He contracted enormous debts, and unblushingly took money from any hands to discharge them, and was foremost in every sort of loose, disreputable adventure. He had none of the more generous qualities and rough nobility of his father, and, without the slightest real belief, gave himself out as a Catholic at Court, and bore the reputation, with Louis XIII. and the Queen-Regent, of frequenting the society of the Jesuit Fathers.

Constant d'Aubigné was a handsome man, frank and pleasant-mannered, full of talent, apt at music and verse-making, and playing well on the lute and viol, to which he sang his own verses with much taste. But the charm was all on the outside. He lived only for pleasure, and gambled

* Constant was born in 1585. Many of the dates of this time are very uncertain as to a year or two.

away all the money he acquired, making himself so completely a slave to this fatal indulgence, that when his father got him away from Paris and his companions, Constant set up a regular mint for false coin at Maillezais, with which to gamble without stint. His downward course was swift and easy, and, having murdered his wife in a fit of jealousy, he fled to Paris to beg a pardon, and was base enough to obtain it by the promise to seize his father's castle of Maillezais, and to hand it over to the royal or Catholic party. Agrippa was, however, a match for his son, forestalling him by making over his own property on excellent terms to the Duc de Rohan, who was then in arms against the king. Then, to end the matter, Louis invaded Poitou as a conqueror, and took the castle of Maillezais, when Agrippa fled for the last time from France and went to Geneva. Constant afterwards actually raised money on his father's Swiss property, and assumed the arms and title of Baron de Crest; but, as he had begun to tamper with the English force then in France, he was arrested in 1627, and sent to the fortress of Château Trompette. The governor, or sub-governor, of the fortress, Pierre de Cardilhac, was a Catholic of a poor but noble family of southern France, whose wife was a de Montalembert. They had one daughter, Jeanne, who, in some way unknown to history, became acquainted with and strongly attached to her father's prisoner, Constant d'Aubigné. It is difficult to understand, but unhappily it is no new thing, that this carefully educated and protected girl, of a noble stock, should fall under the influence of a battered rake of forty-three, ruined by gambling debts, cursed by his father, the murderer of his wife, and with other bloodshed on his

hands—a wretch detested and despised by both Catholic and Protestant parties alike.

Yet so it was, that this abandoned man, with his handsome face and charming manners, his viol-playing, and his rich, sweet voice, ensnared the girl's heart, and they were married in the prison.

Constant's false, gasconading habits followed him thither, and in the marriage-contract this pinchbeck lord figures as "Chevalier, Seigneur, et Baron de Surineau, en Poitou, fils de haut et puissant Seigneur Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigny, Seigneur de Crest." The poor, deluded young wife soon awoke to the knowledge of what her worthless husband really was, and in less than a year afterwards we find her pleading at Niort for a separation, which was granted, and soon after her first child was born, interest was made at Court for Constant's release, when he went back to his evil life more eagerly than ever.

In 1630, as has been said, his father Agrippa died at Crest, being then eighty years old, and it is pleasant to read his young widow's words at the time. She wrote to his children :—

God has withdrawn to Himself our good lord and loving father, and to me also a father and husband so dear and well beloved, whom I think myself happy to have been able to serve, and miserable that I may serve him no more. Alas! he has been taken away so suddenly that I can scarcely believe the blow has fallen. I shall never see him again.

Agrippa left a will, disinheriting Constant for "being a destroyer of his family honour by his enormous crimes," but left his own only patrimony to his grandson, "if there were any lawfully born grandson." He probably shared the

current opinion of the time, that his son and Jeanne de Cardilhac were not really married.

This, as is fully known now, was not true ; but Agrippa himself left a natural son, Nathan, from whom the Merle d'Aubigné family of Geneva descend.

Constant d'Aubigné was not long at liberty. We find him in prison at Poitiers, and then at Niort, where, actually within the prison-walls, his faithful wife gave birth to a little girl. As François de la Rochefoucault stood godfather for her, she was baptized Françoise, and her aunt Madame de Villette, who had already taken charge of her brother's boys, now offered a home to Françoise also, and gave her the same nurse as her own child.

Jeanne d'Aubigné stayed a year with her husband, and then left him, to try if anything could be saved or secured from his property for his three children. She settled herself in great poverty in Paris, where she plunged into a troubled sea of lawsuits with every member of the d'Aubigné family, in which her miserable husband sided against her.

Richelieu's death in 1642 brought about a new state of things. It was Mazarin's policy to open the prisons, and among the enemies of Richelieu that obtained freedom, d'Aubigné was one. He immediately set off to Paris to join his wife, taking with him his little seven-year-old Françoise, who was called in Poitou "Bignette." She had not seen her mother since her birth, and finding her a cold, stern, reserved woman, began to cry immediately for her aunt Villette. Bignette was a very pretty little girl, with nice manners and great sweetness and evenness of temper ; but underneath the quiet sweetness there was a very strong will, and Jeanne d'Aubigné did not set about her treatment

of the child wisely. She forced long lessons in the Catholic Catechism upon her, and obliged her to go to Mass ; upon which Bignette refused the Catechism altogether, and turned her back upon the altar in church. Her mother twisted her round with a sound buffet, which Bignette bore with great coolness, and said it was a glorious thing to suffer in the cause of religion.

Meanwhile Constant, being now sixty years old and overwhelmed with debt, was at his wits' end for some kind of employment, and at last interest was made for him with a company trading to the West Indies, then called the American Isles, who were generally in some difficulty to find governors for the lesser islands. They offered Constant the governorship of the island Marie Galante,* which he immediately accepted, and set sail with his wife and three children. When they reached Martinique, poor little Bignette was so ill that she fell into an unconscious state, not seeming even to breathe, and was just going to be coffined preparatory to burial at sea, when her mother, hanging about her to the last, found an artery feebly pulsating, and exclaimed, "My daughter is not dead!" Long afterwards, the Bishop of Metz referred to this incident, when he said to Bignette in very different circumstances, "Ah ! madame, people are not brought back from that point for nothing."

When the d'Aubigné family landed at Martinique, which was the ship's destination, Constant learnt that the island of Marie Galante was quite uninhabited by any white people, and was given up to a lawless tribe of native Caribs, and obtained leave to remain at Martinique, where

* Between Guadeloupe and Dominica.

he found some little employment, but where he also ran largely into fresh debts, borrowed money on fictitious pretences, and to keep up these, and an appearance of wealth, had always four and twenty slaves in his house. Very little, however, beyond this fact is known of his life at Martinique, as his daughter in after-years purposely avoided the subject, and only once or twice spoke of Martinique at St. Cyr.

It is from her testimony, however, that we know how her miserable father, who was so fervent a Catholic at Niort, called himself in the West Indies a Huguenot ; and when his wife was instructing the children, he would call Bignette away, put her between his knees, and say to her, "My child, I cannot bear that you should have all these dreams told you. You are too clever to be taken in by all this stuff." Poor Jeanne trained her children well in many things besides the Catechism, for her own experience in life had been so sad that she resolved to furnish them with what armour and weapons she could. She taught them to read out of Plutarch's Lives, and instilled into them the spirit of courage, forbearance, and great patience in enduring hardship, which Bignette, at all events, turned afterwards to such excellent account. Once, when their house took fire, and Madame d'Aubigné was thinking only of saving her books, she saw that Bignette was crying bitterly, and exclaimed, "What, is my daughter crying about a house?" Whereas the poor child was watching the flames devouring her great and probably only treasure, a doll which she had put to bed in a little toy couch, with her own cap hung round it for curtains.

Most happily for every one belonging to him, Constant

d'Aubigné died in 1647, and his wife immediately returned to France with her children, carrying with her also a small provision of tobacco, of which she hoped to make a profitable sale. It was characteristic of Bignette's calm, cold, and unforgiving disposition, that when there was an alarm raised of their vessel being seized by corsairs, the little girl observed to her brother, "If they do take us, at least we shall have the comfort of not living any longer with *her* !" (meaning her mother). Jeanne had certainly never done anything to win her children's love, and as soon as the little party reached France, Bignette was sent back rejoicing to her aunt's house and to her Huguenot teaching.

Françoise d'Aubigné was now twelve years old, a tall, distinguished-looking girl, with the appearance of being several years older than her age. Madame de Villette applied herself assiduously to her education and the forming of her character, and, among other excellent habits, accustomed her to dispense her doles of alms to the poor and to enter into their wants. Madame de Villette was, in truth, one of those grand and striking Frenchwomen of the seventeenth century, who remain as landmarks in history. The vices and excesses of the French Court for several succeeding reigns of worthless kings, the unchecked rapacity and cruelty of the nobles, and the luxurious frivolity and evil lives of many of the higher clergy, had raised up a great hatred and disgust toward the Catholic party during the League, and had thus drawn many of the nobler characters of the time towards Calvinism, just as, rather later, many distinguished Frenchmen threw themselves into the Jansenist cause. In fact, the fiendish ingenuity of cruelty shown to the lower classes, and the unspeakable

sufferings at this time, cannot be realized by any readable description now. Let those who have the courage wade through the memoirs of the League wars and their results. Had it not been for the eminent Frenchwomen on both sides, who stand out like beacon-lights in the darkness, the whole framework of society would probably have collapsed. To the last hour of her life, hereafter to be so changed, Françoise never spoke of her aunt without reverential emotion as one of the holiest women she had known, and her anniversary was unfailingly kept by her in silence and prayer.

But Françoise was not allowed to remain with her aunt in that happy and beneficent home. A certain Madame de Neuillant, with whom Jeanne d'Aubigné had placed her son Charles as page, represented to the Queen-Mother, Anne of Austria, that a Catholic girl of family ought not to be left exposed to Calvinist influences, and she obtained a royal order to have the charge of Françoise made over to herself. It was a sad change; for Madame de Neuillant was a consummate miser, and she obliged Françoise and her own daughter to dress like peasant girls and take care of her poultry. In this way, with masks over their noses to keep them from reddening, with two little baskets of coarse food on their arms, a book of verses to learn from by heart, and two huge sticks in their hands, these poor girls were sent out for the livelong day, to keep the flocks of geese and turkeys from straying at their own sweet will.

After a while, Madame de Neuillant bethought her that the care of turkeys did not exactly fulfil the limits of religious instruction upon which she had based her application for the care of Françoise, and she resolved, having tried various harsh measures herself, to send the girl to an

Ursuline convent at Niort. But, at the same time, she characteristically applied to Madame de Villette to pay the pension of the school for her niece. Madame de Villette said she was quite willing to supply Françoise with clothes and her personal wants, but, being a Huguenot herself, she did not think it consistent to pay for her being taught in a convent. The poor nuns, therefore, received no pension at all for many years, and bestowed every care upon Françoise, without the slightest return. Françoise, however, did all she could to make them some return herself. There was a nun in the community, Mother Céleste, whom she came to love above all the other nuns, and for whose sake she not only studied diligently herself, but took charge of the younger and idler girls, hearing their lessons, teaching them to spell, write, and do their sums before the classes began. And very often she would get up in the night and iron the under-garments of the little girls, that they might look neat and clean in class, and save their mistress trouble. Her greatest reward was to see the poor nun's astonishment at finding her toil so lightened to her hands.

Long years afterwards, when the poor little convent schoolgirl had become a very great lady, she asked leave of absence from Court to travel a hundred and fifty miles to see the face of Mother Céleste once more. And yet, notwithstanding all this deep and unalterable love, Françoise d'Aubigné could not, at that time of her girlhood, be won over to the Church. Her reason was still wedded to the Huguenot side by the sterling influence of her aunt's character and life.

When this Ursuline community found, after patient trial, that no religious success ensued by educating and

boarding Françoise for nothing, they sent her back to Madame de Neuillant, who, as her apostolic zeal had evaporated, returned Françoise to her mother's care. Unfortunately, poor Jeanne d'Aubigné was a mother only in name, and the world-weary, haggard, buffeted woman, still absorbed in pursuing her husband's relations from court to court in bitter lawsuits, had no place in her heart or life for her daughter. Accordingly, Françoise was quickly packed off to another Ursuline convent in the Faubourg St. Jacques, where there seems to have been a conspicuous absence of Mothers Céleste. Françoise speaks of "*rudoiments, duretés, et façons cruelles*" as having been her portion, and the treatment became so unbearable to the high-spirited girl of thirteen, "tall, strong, and very resolute," that she wrote the following touching letter to Madame de Villette, the first known of one of the largest and most admirable collections of letters to be found in the world:—

MADAME AND AUNT,

The remembrance of the remarkable favours that fell from you upon some poor little forsaken ones causes me to stretch out my hands to you, and implore you to use your credit and means to take me away from these people, among whom my life is worse than death. Ah! madame and aunt, you cannot imagine the hell that this so-called house of God is to me, and the roughness, harshness, and cruel usages of those who have been made the keepers of my body, and of my soul also, if it were not that they cannot reach this. Rivette will tell you the whole tale of my anguish and sufferings, she being the only person I can trust here. I beg of you again, madame and aunt, to take pity on the daughter of your brother and your humble servant,

FRANÇOISE D'AUBIGNY. *

Paris, Oct. 12, 1649 (?).

* The more ancient form of the name.

Whether Madame de Villette ever got this letter is very doubtful, or who the "Rivette" was to whose hands it was entrusted. It is more likely that it was intercepted, and that the Ursulines were brought by it to see the wisdom of changing their course. At all events, they did change it, and began to treat Françoise with much kindness and consideration. They no longer obliged her to attend Mass, or to abstain on meagre days; and before long, compulsion having ceased to stir up her opposition, Françoise asked leave to hear the chief religious differences argued before her, which was done for several days. Finding that the Huguenot minister blinked certain scriptural references treating of chief doctrines, while the Catholic priest argued throughout by appeal to the Bible, Françoise, unasked, declared herself at length to be satisfied, and begged that she might be reconciled to the Catholic Church. Her own knowledge of the letter of the Scriptures was wonderful for her age, and those who had to deal with her testify that in thoughtful clearness and solidity of judgment she surpassed the generality of grown-up women. It was exceedingly characteristic of her that she delayed her abjuration for a further period of prolonged thought, and desired first to be distinctly assured that she should not be required to believe, or rather to profess, that, on account of her Huguenot opinions, Madame de Villette would be eternally lost.

CHAPTER III.

1649-50—1664-65.

AFTER her abjuration, Françoise left the convent and went home to her mother, who was then living in one small room in the Rue Tournelles in Paris, and subsisting chiefly by needlework. It may well be imagined that the advent of a tall, handsome girl, with a healthy appetite, and looking as if she were eighteen, was not the most welcome circumstance in Madame d'Aubigné's life ; and Françoise, who thoroughly appreciated her mother's unmotherly coldness, showed by her proud silence and sullen countenance that she did so. The ill-assorted companionship was, happily, not of long continuance, and it came to an end in a remarkable way. A near neighbour of Madame d'Aubigné was a dramatic author, of great repute in the *salons* of Paris for his incisive writings, his caustic wit and drollery, and his grotesque deformity of figure. He had once asked Madame d'Aubigné for information about Martinique, where he had thoughts of going ; and, to avoid receiving him in her miserable lodging, she went with Françoise to his rooms. There the poor sensitive girl found herself, in a very shabby frock much too short for her, in the midst of a group of well-dressed, fashionable ladies, and she was so overwhelmed with shame that she burst into tears. The kind-hearted little cripple was

touched by the contrast between the girl's noble beauty and her extreme poverty and suffering, and offered to supply her with whatever money she needed. Françoise refused his offer decidedly and with great haughtiness, but this only seemed to increase the little man's interest in her. Almost immediately afterwards, Madame d'Aubigné went away from Paris, and returned to Niort, as a sort of last refuge, where she fell ill and died, thus bringing to an end one of the saddest and most pitiable lives on record, even among the annals of women.

Nothing remained for Françoise but to go back to her miserly protector, Madame de Neuillant, who, in about a year's time, rid herself of the charge by making up a marriage between Françoise and the crippled comic poet, Scarron. There was a universal outcry among their acquaintances at her sacrificing this beautiful girl at fifteen, of great talents and promise, to a hunchback past middle age; but Madame de Neuillant was triumphant. Scarron himself showed the finest qualities of character. He offered Françoise the choice either to become his wife and the nurse and comfort of his old age, or to receive from him a dowry sufficient to take her to any convent she liked to choose. Françoise had learnt true wisdom from her untoward childhood, and, knowing that she had not the slightest sign of any call to be a nun, she consented, even with grateful joy, to become Scarron's wife. They were married in 1652, and most truly did Françoise soon show herself to be the comfort of his life. Before very long she was able to do even more for him than this, in return for the shelter of his home.*

* Lavallée, "La Famille d'Aubigné et l'Enfance de Madame de Maintenon."

In that home she became his right hand for every sort of work, his secretary and his pupil, learning of him Latin, Italian, and Spanish, and writing at his dictation. Her beauty, conversation, and noble simplicity of manners made her house a gathering-place for the most eminent men and women in Paris, and Scarron delighted to see among the crowd the Duc de Vivonne, the Marquis de Coligny, Marshal d'Albret, and Mdle. de Scudéry. Scarron's own tales show abundantly that the conversation of the day was free to the grossest licence, and it became his wife's aim to correct both his tongue and his manners. Françoise was courtesy itself to his friends, but her exceeding modesty and noble reserve affected them so strongly that the wildest rake and wit among them paid her the respect of bridling his tongue. One of the chief of these Paris gallants once said that he would rather offend the queen by free speech than Madame Scarron, and Françoise was resolute in her determination to uphold the position she had gained. Little by little, Scarron himself yielded to her admirable influence, ceased to jest loosely and to use the gross language of the day, and exchanged the coarse buffoonery of his verses for a more restrained gaiety and wit. It was a most rare and signal triumph for a wife in her girlhood to achieve over the formed habits of middle age, and it was won entirely by the sweet and wifely influence that never made a wound.

Not long before her husband's death, Madame Scarron wrote a letter to Madame de Villarceaux that abundantly proves what her position had become in the society of Paris. On the grand entry of Louis XIV. with his bride Marie-Thérèse, Madame Scarron was in a balcony at the Hôtel

d'Aumont with the Queen-Mother, Henrietta Maria of England, the Princess Palatine, Cardinal Mazarin, and some of the greatest ladies of the Court. She was then just five and twenty. This is part of the account she gives :—

Paris, 27th August, 1660.

The household of the Cardinal was not among the ugliest (in the procession). It began with seventy-two baggage mules, the first four and twenty with housings ordinary enough ; the next four and twenty with finer, more beautiful and vivid trappings than the most beautiful tapestry you ever saw ; and the last four and twenty had red velvet embroidered in gold and silver, with silver bits and bells ; in fact, their magnificence astonished everybody. Then came twenty-four pages and all the gentlemen and officials of the house, quite a number of them ; after that twelve coaches and four, and then the guards, so that the household was more than an hour passing by. Then came the household of Monsieur. I forgot to say that among the Cardinal's there were twenty-four led horses, magnificently trapped, and so beautiful themselves that I could not take my eyes off them. Monsieur's household after that looked very pitiful, but then came the King's, truly royal, for nothing in the world could be more beautiful. You know better than I what it contains, but you cannot imagine the beauty of the horses upon which the pages of the great and little stables were mounted. They bounded along, and were managed in the prettiest way in the world. Then came all the musketeers with their different plumes—the first white ; the second yellow, black, and white ; the third blue, white, and black ; and the fourth green and white. After them the pages of the chamber, in flame-coloured velvet tunics covered with gold ; then M. de Navailles * at the head of the light horse, most magnificent ; then Vardes † at the head of the Cent-Suisses, in green and gold, and very hand-

* Philippe de Montault, Duke and Marshal of France.

† Marquis de Vardes.

some. . . . The marshals of France preceded the King, before whom a canopy of brocade was borne . . . [four pages of manuscript are here wanting]; then the Chancellor [Seguier] appeared in a robe and cloak of gold brocade, surrounded by lackeys and pages in violet satin thick with silver, and covered with plumes. . . . I could not say which of the gentlefolks looked the best; but if I had to give the prize, it should be to the horse that carried the seals. . . . The Chevalier de Gramont* was all flame-colour, and very splendid. I have just heard that the King gave the keys of the city to M. de Viesmes, who immediately sent them to Madame de Navailles.

How little did this young Madame Scarron, in a few months to be a widow, think that, in after-years, she should be no less certainly the wife of Louis XIV. than the royal princess now triumphing beside him!

They lived in this way for eight years, and when Scarron died in 1660, his wife's first act was to found a perpetual mass for his soul's rest at the Church of the Jacobins in the Rue St. Dominique. Madame Scarron at that time lived in the Rue Vaugirard, and she was left a very handsome widow at the age of five and twenty.† Mdlle. de Scudéry's inventory of her charms, according to the unimaginative descriptions of her time, is still worth repeating:—

“She was tall, and had a fine figure, but not so tall as to be forbidding, and only such as to give her a good presence. . . . A smooth, beautiful skin, light, pretty chestnut hair, a well-shaped nose, a clean-cut mouth, a noble, sweet, modest expression, and, what made her beauty more striking, the finest eyes in the world.” And again: “Her

* The subject of Count Hamilton's Memoirs.

† Languet de Gergy, “Mémoires sur Madame de Maintenon.”

mind was just suited to her beauty ; large, gentle, pleasant, and well balanced. She never put herself forward as a beauty, though she had a thousand undeniable charms ; so that, joining her good qualities to her beauty and wit, it must be owned that she was worthy of all the admiration she excited."

Madame Scarron was held in such high esteem, in fact, that Madame de Thianges and the Duc d'Aiguillon invited her to stay with them after her husband died, and made such interest for her with the Queen-Mother that her husband's annual pension of two thousand livres was settled upon her. She then prudently settled herself as a boarder, first at the Hospitalière, Place Royale, and then with the Ursulines, Rue St. Jacques, where she had been reconciled to the Church, and where she could with propriety receive her best and most desirable friends. She dressed always at that time in *étamine*, a woollen material much used by gentlewomen of moderate means, and, with spotlessly clean linen and pretty aprons and shoes, was reckoned one of the best-dressed women of the day. At the same time her scrupulous economy enabled her to afford all that she and her maid required, and yet have money to spare for the poor. She might well say, as she did, that these were some of the happiest days of her life. Her visits were chiefly to the great Hôtels, de Richelieu and d'Albret, where the cream of the courtly and polished society of the time assembled, and where literary men showed themselves at their best. Here the universal respect paid to Madame Scarron was due, not only to her delightful conversation, self-respect, and power of gently restraining others, but also, as the notorious Bussy Rabutin testifies, to her

"glorious and undeniable poverty," which in those conditions of society meant far more than is expressed. Even as it was, Madame Scarron's good name was called in question by many powerful and envious slanderers, notably by St. Simon himself; and of these she could proudly say, "Those who slander me do not know me. . . . It is sad to end life among those who have never known its beginning."

Speaking of herself at that time in her after-years, Madame Scarron says, in her calm, self-dissecting way, "Women were fond of me because I was gentle and more intent upon others than upon myself. Men were attracted because I still had the charm of youth. I saw something of all kinds of society, but always passed through them with honour. . . . I had no desire to be specially cared for by anybody. I wished to be liked by all, *to be well spoken of, to be singled out and approved by good people; for that was, in a way, my idol.* For that I could have done or suffered anything. I put a restraint upon my wishes in many ways, but that cost me nothing, provided that I was in great repute. I did not care for wealth, but it was necessary for me to be respected."

Probably this strong desire for approbation at this time of her life alarmed Madame Scarron, and she chose as her director the Abbé Gobelin, a doctor of the Sorbonne, an austere man, whom she consulted how she should lead a stricter life.

He soon saw that this demure, staid, neatly dressed young widow was greedy of praise and good repute, while full also of good aspirations, and he counselled her to make herself less agreeable in society and to retrench the worldliness of her dress. Upon this last subject Madame Scarron,

somewhat aggrieved, remonstrated. Her dress, she said, was only what the better sort of middle-class women wore, of simple stuff, never of any kind of silk or trimmed with lace. Probably Madame Scarron had deluded herself as to the manipulation of her "simple" materials, for the Abbé replied, with the charming mingled acuteness and unfailing courtesy of the French ecclesiastic, "I do not know how it is, most honoured lady, but when you come to confession I see a great quantity of stuff falling at my feet, which has altogether the air and effect of too much grace and style."

On one occasion Madame Scarron said to him, "I do not know anything about sins. I have certain moral qualities and good dispositions which incline me to do little harm, and I so much desire to be esteemed that it is my safeguard against yielding to passion."

These words probably furnish the chief key to her life at that time.

Abbé Gobelin imposed silence and reserve in society so effectually upon Madame Scarron, that it excited the notice of a certain keen-eyed frequenter of the great *salons*, Abbé Testu, and he inferred from the change in her that she intended to become a nun. Hence he suddenly one day observed to her, "Madame, I have no wish to know any of your secrets; but you are dealing with a director who is wanting in prudence."

Abbé Gobelin was no doubt imprudent in treating Madame Scarron so harshly, for his manner was so abrupt and forbidding that she nearly fell into despair. She left off going to confession, and even neglected her usual devotions. Then, taking her courage in both hands, she went to him, told him everything she had felt and all she

had left undone, so that henceforward he became her most trusted, constant, and valued friend till he died. He had in truth the utmost esteem for her, and was so bent upon rooting out the faults that stood in the way of her spiritual progress, that he one day said to her, "I ought to give you as a practice to go and kiss the sacred pictures and devout objects in the churches before all the people, just as poor women do."

"And I should have done it," she afterwards said to her friends at St. Cyr, "whatever pain it had cost me, and even if I had known that everybody was laughing at me."

After his death, it was found that Abbé Gobelin had left all her letters to him to the community at St. Cyr, excepting certain of them relating to the King, which she had required of him to burn.

Among the wide variety of acquaintances made at the Hôtels de Richelieu and d'Albret, Madame Scarron became intimate with Madame de Sévigné, Madame de Coulanges, and, after some time, with the celebrated Court beauty, Madame de Montespan, and the Princess des Chalais,* afterwards the Princess des Ursins, who played so large a part in the affairs of Spain. This princess was extremely jealous of Madame de Montespan, whose splendid beauty and brilliant, daring tongue was attracting Louis XIV., just freed from his ties with Mdlle. de la Vallière, and ripe for some new passion.

* First known as the Princess Bracciano—"de Braquiane" in Madame de Maintenon's letters. "Ursins" is the French translation of Orsini.

CHAPTER IV.

1664-65—1679.

As is well known, after many struggles, more of pride than principle, Madame de Montespan succeeded the unfortunate Louise de la Vallière as the King's mistress, and for years bound him in her strong chains.

When she bore him her first child, the minister, de Louvois, waited on Madame Scarron, and astonished her by proposing that she should take charge of it and bring it up in secret. Finding that the King was, in truth, the father of the child, Madame Scarron took counsel of Abbé Gobelin as to how far she was justified in undertaking such an office ; and, acting on his advice, she sent word that if the King ordered her to do so, she was willing to take charge of the child.

Louis was actually not ashamed to send for Madame Scarron to St. Germain, where the Court then was, and to ask her as a favour to himself to bring up his illegitimate child.

That child died ; but there were soon two more boys and a girl, and Madame Scarron found that it would be necessary to take a house and to enter upon a course of difficulties and fatigue that she had little foreseen. She therefore removed herself and the children and their

nurses to a large, rambling house in the Rue Vaugirard, standing some way back from the street, and surrounded by a garden shut in by high walls.

It was not a pleasant office in any sense, as her own account of it vividly shows :—

The strange kind of honour [of the charge laid on her by the King] cost me an infinitude of pain and trouble. Often I was standing on ladders, doing the work of upholsterers and workmen, who might not be allowed to come into the house. I did everything myself, for the nurses did not put their hands to a single thing, lest they should be tired and the milk not be good. I often went on foot and disguised, seeking one nurse after another, or carrying linen or meat, etc., under my arm. I would often spend the whole night with one of the children who was ill in a little house outside Paris. In the morning I would go home by a little back-gate, and, after having myself dressed, would go out at the front door to my coach, and drive to the Hôtels de Richelieu or d'Albret, that the friends whose society I frequented might perceive nothing, or even know that I had a secret to keep. Everybody saw how thin I became, but no one guessed the reason. This is how God makes use of everything to fulfil His plans, and how He leads us insensibly, without our knowing when we are led.

Vague stories were, however, flying about, most of them injurious to Madame Scarron ; and one day the minister, Colbert, made his way to the retired house in the Rue Vaugirard to see if he could pick up any clue to the mystery. All he saw, however, was a nurse, who came in and picked up one of the children as if it had been a bundle of dirty linen, and carried it away tucked under her arm.* M. Colbert, therefore, went away as wise as he came.

* Languet de Gergy ; Lavallée.

But Madame Scarron's chief difficulties were with Madame de Montespan herself, who was never satisfied to leave her children to her friend's wise care. She would come at all sorts of hours, interfere with every plan, and stuff the poor babies with all sorts of unwholesome food, upsetting the nurses and the whole order of the house, and flying into the wildest and most ungovernable passions. She hated Madame Scarron because of her consistent piety, which was a tacit reproach, yet would never allow her for an instant to think of giving up her charge of the children. Once, when she wrote her a little note ordering her to go to her, she added, "In God's name, do not make any of your great eyes at me!" So far from being of the slightest use, once, when a fire broke out in the house and Madame Scarron sent to her, she returned answer that "she was glad of the fire, for it was a sign of good luck!"

Poor Madame Scarron yearned to break her chains and live in peace, that she might lead a higher and more regular life, but no doubt Abbé Gobelin saw clearly how these troubles were breaking up her worldliness and love of appreciation. She wrote to him very urgently and continually on the subject:—

To-day Madame de Montespan and I have had a very sharp dispute, and, as I am the one to suffer, I have wept greatly, while she gave her own version of it to the King. I confess that it troubles me very much to remain in a position in which I may have mischances like this every day, and that it would be very sweet to be set at liberty. A thousand times I have wished to be a nun, and the dread of repenting of it has made me pass through many states of feeling that a thousand people would call a vocation. For seven months I have been dying to go into retirement, but the same fear hinders me from carrying it out.

This is a cowardly prudence, and my life is consumed in strange disturbance. I beg of you to think of it before God, and reflect a little upon my rest. I know that I can assure my salvation here, but I think I could be more sure of it elsewhere. I cannot think it can be God's will that I should endure Madame de Montespan. She is incapable of friendship, and I cannot do without that. She cannot bear my opposition without hating me, and she represents me to the King as she chooses, and makes me lose his esteem. He looks upon me as an odd woman, who must be humoured, and I dare not speak directly to himself, as she would never forgive me; and I owe to Madame de Montespan too much to say anything against her. In this way I can do nothing to remedy the suffering; and meanwhile death is coming, and both you and I shall deeply regret such a waste of time.

In another letter, she says:—

I beg of you to ask of God that He will guide my plans for His own glory and my salvation. I make this my prayer every day, and what gives me peace is that if any pious, sensible person advised me to stay where I am, I should do so, cost me what it would; and if I were properly treated here, and had everything as I wished, I would still leave, if it were desired. This indifference makes me hope that God will bless me and not forsake me.

The just, right-judging character thus laid entirely open, holding firmly by the right course, and keeping itself pure and clean among the smirched companions of her life, presents a very different picture to the scheming temporizing woman held up to obloquy by St. Simon.

Madame Scarron again wrote to Abbé Gobelin that she was too old to change her state of life (for that of a convent), and that, according to her means, she should try to establish herself in great repose. The "means" alluded to was a sum of a hundred thousand francs (£4000) promised her by

Louis XIV. for the care of his children, but the payment of it was delayed, for he had become aware of the strain between her and the royal mistress, and was most reluctant to lose her valuable aid. In fact, he was so delighted with the eldest boy's conduct and knowledge, that he justly attributed so great a success in training and education to the signal qualities of his governess. In the end, therefore, to put a stop to all difficulties, the King resolved to acknowledge the children, and the declaration giving the boys the titles of Duc du Maine and Comte du Vexin was registered in Parliament in 1673. The Duc du Maine was received at Court, and his governess was obliged to follow him there, and was most honourably treated and received with open arms by her old associates. Among the most eminent of these was Madame de Sévigné, who thus wrote of her: "Madame Scarron sups here every night. She is delicious as a companion! It is a pleasure to hear her discuss [any subject]. She dresses in a modest but sumptuous way. She is delightful, beautiful, pleasant, and always quite at her ease."

In 1674, Madame de Maintenon wrote to Abbé Gobelin:—

Our princes [Duc du Maine and Comte du Vexin] are in perfect health, and are breaking the toys you sent them with much delight.

But Madame de Montespan, who had now quite changed her tactics, and flaunted everywhere as the favourite who held the King captive, was more oppressive and vexatious with Madame Scarron than ever. She therefore pressed the King very much for the payment of what he had promised, that she might buy a small property and retire to live upon it.

Louis not only did this, but added a second sum of a hundred thousand francs, and Madame Scarron, completing what was needed with forty thousand francs of her own savings, bought the old property of Maintenon, carrying with it the title of "marquise," and was thenceforth known by her historical designation of Madame de Maintenon. Honours, like misfortunes, do not come alone, and Madame de Richelieu then suggested that her old friend should marry a certain duke, who was looking about for a suitable wife. About this Madame de Maintenon wrote to Abbé Gobelin :—

Madame la Duchesse de Richelieu and Madame de Montespan are in treaty for a marriage for me, which, however, will not be concluded. It is a duke [Duc de Villars], a disagreeable and very beggarly man.* . . . However, I have not broken off the negotiation, for I should be very glad that Madame de Richelieu should discern the coldness and indifference of Madame de Montespan as to all that is essential to me.

Looking back for a few moments upon the last events of Madame de Maintenon's life as Madame Scarron, much might doubtless be said tending both to her discredit and to that of Abbé Gobelin ; as if she were in truth upholding the King in his vicious career, and sustaining the shameless woman, once her friend, in her double adultery, and that this lowering and discreditable position was not only condoned, but encouraged by her director. It is obvious that in any attempt to unravel such difficulties as these the whole light thrown upon them by the intervening time must be set aside, and we must transfer ourselves to the state of society in which the actors lived. The divinity

* "*Fort gueux*" (Languet de Gergy ; Lavalée).

that hedges a king was then no metaphor of poetry, but a deeply rooted belief and plain, accepted fact, and even half-royal natural children were thus born to a certain measure of the royal honour. Then, as Abbé Gobelin himself said, these poor children were bound to be brought up in a Christian manner, and with measures the more carefully taken that their condition was full of dangers.

It is remarkable that at this time Louis XIV. still rather disliked Madame de Maintenon than otherwise. He spoke to her seldom, and to Madame de Montespan alluded to her as "your learned lady" (*bel esprit*), so that as yet the behaviour of the royal mistress, though imperious and uncontrolled, was not maddened by jealousy. Yet her letters to Abbé Gobelin breathe of nothing but the weariness of her life.

M. le Duc du Maine is always ill. . . . I grieve to feel that I love this child no less than the other,* and this weakness puts me out so much that I was crying all through the Mass. There is nothing so silly as to love to this excess a child that is not my own, whose lot I can never dispose of, and who will finally make me so unhappy that I shall die, and that will give great pain to those to whom he belongs. In truth, there is a great want of common sense in remaining in such a disagreeable position. The coolness with which I am treated has much increased since you left, and my friends perceive it, and compliment me upon my disgrace. I spoke of it yesterday to Madame de Montespan, and said . . . that I saw without doubt that I was getting on very badly with her, and that she had set me at variance with the King. She gave me some very bad arguments in return, and we had a sharp interview, though very frank on both sides. Then I went to Mass, and returned to dine with the King. They told M. de Louvois all about it, and sent

* The little prince who had died.

him to me in the evening to make me listen to reason. I thought he quite understood my own arguments, and I expressed them perhaps too frankly, but you know that it is not possible for me to speak otherwise. I promised what he wished, and Madame de Montespan and I are to talk over it this morning, which I will do on my side very meekly; but I stand firm as to my resolve to leave them at the end of the year, and I shall spend this time in praying to God to lead me to what is best for my salvation.

I am overcome with melancholy; they are killing these poor children, and I am not able to hinder it. My love for them makes me unbearable to those to whom they belong, and the impossibility of hiding what I feel makes me hateful to the people with whom my life is spent, and whom I have no wish to displease if they were not what they are. Sometimes I determine not to put so much energy into what I do, and to leave these children to their mother's management; then I scruple to offend God by this neglect, and I begin over again that care of them which increases my love, and which, when I shut myself up with them, gives me a thousand causes for grief and pain. This is the state I am in, which is one full of trouble. Nothing can give me rest but a home, which I cannot have.

Again, she says:—

I am eaten up by sorrow and watching. I am perishing away visibly, and I have the saddest fits of depression.

In January, 1675, she writes:—

I am always of the same mind and resolve. We must wait for the journey to Barèges, and I must go if the little duke goes. He is better, and the little count also. The princess is ill, and the whole faculty cannot say whether she has the small-pox or not. Everything else goes on its way; the business about Maintenon is over, and the creditors are being paid off every day. I have the greatest wish to go there, but the children's illness keeps me. I commend myself to your prayers.

A week afterwards :—

I was more impatient to tell you about Maintenon than you could be to hear of it. I went there for three days, which, without exaggerating, seemed like a moment. It is a fairly pretty house, rather too large for the household I intend to have, pleasantly situated, and with very good privileges. In a word, I am very well satisfied, and I wish I were there. It is true that the King has given me the [title] of “Maintenon.”

A month later :—

Terrible scenes are going on between Madame de Montespan and me ; the King was witness to them yesterday.”

To go back a little, one day the King was resolved to test the character and learning of the little Duc du Maine, who was five years old, by himself, and sending away all the attendants and gentlemen of his suite, he shut himself up with the child only. He questioned him, and talked to him for a considerable time, and the little boy replied with the utmost grace and openness, but with perfect respect. The King then readmitted his suite, and told them how delighted he was with the boy, and especially with his exceeding reasonableness, showing how accurately now he discerned Madame de Maintenon’s characteristics, and the real qualities of the “learned lady.” The King was at that time accustomed to write notes to Madame de Montespan when he could not see her, and one day, when she was occupied with company, she commissioned Madame de Maintenon to answer the note for her. The King instantly perceived the wide difference between the two minds, and from that time rather took opportunities of receiving notes from his children’s governess, and of talking to her whenever there was an opportunity. This,

of course, raised up the fiercest jealousy in Madame de Montespan, which added the last touch to her misconduct to Madame de Maintenon. It was during one of the lively passages of arms between the two ladies that the King came into the room and begged to know what the quarrel was about. Madame de Montespan, sobbing with passion, could not even answer; but Madame de Maintenon, with perfect calm, begged his Majesty to step into another room, and she would speak to him. He did so, and she then told him that what she was now suffering from Madame de Montespan was more than she could bear. The King tried to excuse Madame de Montespan, and begged Madame de Maintenon not to give up her office, and to retain the charge of the children for the present. The journey for the little duke's sake to Barèges, in the Pyrenees, was then arranged, and during that time there were four months' peace for Madame de Maintenon. Louis sent his little son and his governess in great state, and granted her leave to bestow bountiful alms on the road. As the Huguenots had ravaged and plundered many of the churches on their route towards the south, Madame de Maintenon obtained leave from the various bishops to visit the sacristies and see for herself what was wanting, and then liberally presented them with chalices, ciboriums, and other sacred vessels for the service of the altar. This special form of almsgiving delighted the King, and he was also exceedingly pleased with Madame de Maintenon's full and frequent letters, giving an account of all that they did and saw on the way. Madame de Maintenon renewed acquaintance also with some of her own family, and she made an opportunity to visit and make presents to the

Ursuline nuns at Niort, who had been so good to her in her forlorn childish days. Charles d'Aubigné was at that time governor of Cognac, and he received the travellers with a company of little boys armed and uniformed like the royal musketeers, who formed themselves into a mimic guard of honour for the Duc du Maine, which gave the little prince great pleasure. During this journey Madame de Maintenon formed a lasting friendship with the duke's physician, M. Fagon, a little, deformed man, full of cultivation and scientific acquirements.

Unfortunately, the waters at Barèges were of no service to the little duke, and when the party returned to Versailles, they found Madame de Montespan fiercer, more wrathful, and more jealous than ever. Then, when Madame de Maintenon went away to her own house for a day or two to take breath, the capricious sultana wrote her caressing and appealing notes, and could not be pacified until Madame de Maintenon returned to Court, to be bullied and teased over again.

About this time, she drew up for herself certain rules of life, which she would observe if she were free of the Court, which are too characteristic not to be given in full :—

I should get up at seven o'clock in the summer and at eight in the winter ; give an hour to prayer before calling in my women ; then dress and see tradesmen, workmen, or attend to other business ; and then go to church till dinner-time.

I should arrange to go out twice a week, either for pleasure or necessary visits ; to sup with some friend on those days, and come home at ten o'clock ; to stay at home twice a week, and give dinner or supper to some special friends, men and women ; to go to bed always at ten, have family prayers with the servants, undress and be in bed by eleven.

I should give the other three days a week, one to visiting the poor of the parish, another to going to the Hôtel Dieu (hospital), and another to some prison, and spend those evenings in needle-work or reading alone.

I should never receive visitors on the eve of the great feasts, or the eve or day of Communion. I would never fail in private devotions, would dress modestly, and never wear gold or silver.

I should give the tenth of my income to the poor. This is how I would begin, waiting for whatever else zeal might lead to.

I have said nothing about Sundays and holidays, as I take for granted those are the first obligations.

This rule of life, remarkable as the secret aspiration of a lady at the most splendid, luxurious, and scandalous Court of the time, and still more remarkable as being looked upon by her as a "beginning" only of her upward way, she sent to Abbé Gobelin, with these words :—

See what you can find to say about this plan. I have left a margin to see what you will add or cut off. . . . While waiting for this time of repose and calm that looks to me so delicious, I am doing nothing worth doing, and am giving myself up to such idleness and discouragement as often make me afraid lest my plans for devotion may not be like those for the furnishing of Maintenon.

The Abbé Gobelin neither added to nor cut off anything from this carefully laid-out sketch of a Christian life, which he probably looked upon as self-chosen, and therefore less likely to be of service to Madame de Maintenon's soul than the comfortless vexations she was then struggling through. He strongly urged her, on the contrary, not to retire from Court, but to sanctify the disagreeable obstacles that came in her daily path ; and, unlike a good many other pious

women, Madame de Maintenon strictly followed his advice, and found, in doing so, true peace of soul. At the same time she seized every opportunity of doing good. She paid the pensions of several poor, well-born girls at school, sought out the poor around her who hid their distress, fed a number of starving families, and gave abundant alms by the hands of others, without letting her own name appear.

Meanwhile, the whole Court was stirred up by the fact that a priest at Versailles had refused absolution to Madame de Montespan, and that Bossuet had not only upheld him in his right to do so, but had forcibly urged the King to remove this scandal from him, and to make a good Easter Communion. Madame de Montespan was therefore ordered to leave the Court, and went to the splendid house the King had given her at Clagny.* The King then went away to the Flanders campaign; but, to soften the idea of disgrace to his mistress, he gave the most lavish order for decorating her house at Clagny. Madame de Sévigné describes the circumstances as usual with a few touches of her magic pen:—

Certain ladies have been to Clagny. They found the beauty so busy with her work and the enchanting things they are doing for her, that, as for me, I could only think of Dido building Carthage. You cannot picture to yourself how triumphant she is in the midst of her workmen, twelve hundred in number. Apollo's palace and Armida's gardens are only a slight description of it all.

* Clagny was a magnificent château built by Mansart, with large grounds and a sheet of water, the gift of Louis XIV. to Madame de Montespan. It passed to the Duc du Maine and his two sons, the Prince de Dombes and the Comte d'Eu. This last bartered it to Louis XV., who ordered it to be destroyed in 1769. Part of the northern district of Versailles is called Quartier de Clagny.

It need scarcely be said that the King's chains were not yet broken, and that Madame de Montespan returned to Court for yet another while.

The Duc du Maine reaped from Barèges this advantage, that though he limped all his life, he was able to walk alone for the first time, and it was a moment of great joy to his father when he saw him come into his room holding only Madame de Maintenon's hand. The minister, Louvois, paid her a visit of congratulation in the evening, and she supped at the Hôtel de Richelieu, where her old friends overwhelmed her with caresses and rejoicing. She was also temporarily at rest from Madame de Montespan, who, as the King was again away with the army (1676), had gone to Bourbon, in Allier, for the waters. Madame de Sévigné reports that the favourite's suite was of forty-six people ; that she had a coach-and-six for herself, another for her women, two *fourgons*, six mules, and twelve mounted servants. At Moulins, she embarked in a brightly painted and gilt barge, made gay with thousands of monograms and streaming banners of France and Navarre. In this same year Madame de Maintenon wrote that she and Madame de Montespan were quite good friends.

For yet two years Louis XIV. remained bound to his insolent mistress, but if it is possible to fix the date of a letter from Madame de Maintenon to Abbé Gobelin as written in 1679, he was then entangled in the meshes of a fresh intrigue with Madame de Fontanges. This letter says, "You know what need I have for prayers ; I ask yours again, and that you will pray and get prayers for the King, who is on the edge of a great precipice." This new passion quite destroyed the hopes of Madame de

Maintenon for a while ; for she had seen that the influence of Madame de Montespan was declining, and had really hoped that the King was about to regulate his life. It is certain that about this date all connection with Madame de Montespan ceased, and she obtained the post of superintendent of the Queen's household. At the same time, the Dauphin married a Bavarian princess,* and Madame de Maintenon received the much-coveted appointment of her lady-in-waiting (*dame d'atour*), which at once severed her from all connection with and annoyance from the tyrannical discarded favourite.†

She made use of her well-earned rest to turn to her brother Charles d'Aubigné's affairs. She had urged him to marry as a means of regulating his unsteady life, but he now overthrew all her hopes by a marriage with G  nevi  ve Pi  tre, a girl of fifteen, wholly unsuited to his condition of life. Madame de Maintenon offered to train this unpromising young person, and to the untoward marriage we owe two of her most characteristic letters. The last, which gives the prices of food and living at that time, is of unique value. Both letters are to M. d'Aubign  .

February 28, 1678.

My affection for you makes me hope that you have not married merely for the sake of being married, and that you will try to make a sensible woman of your wife. Her youth gives me courage to work at this ; and if you will not destroy what I shall do here and while away, I hope we shall be able to achieve something.

It seems to me that she is a girl who has been spoilt by

* The celebrated Elizabeth of Bavaria, Princess Palatine, spoken of in Madame de Maintenon's letters as "la Palatine" or "Madame."

† Languet de Gergy ; Lavall  e.

being an only daughter [and as being of the middle class, who always bring up their children the worst].* To begin with what is most essential, she is religious, and you ought to strengthen her in those good impressions. Your own interest in this is God's interest also; and, plain-looking as she is, she will find means of going wrong, if you deprive her of such restraints.

Do not, therefore, on any account prevent her from leading a regular life. Do not let her get up late; let her hear Mass every day, and never go out alone; but do not allow her to play the great lady. Keep her in a middle position, in which she will not be lowered, and in which you will also escape the ridicule that must fall upon you if you assume too high a tone.

[She is insupportably rude: it is the unfailing consequence of low birth, and her living at Cognac will finish her, if you do not] keep your hand upon her to make her behave well, so that when she is served by somebody else's footman (at table) she does not thank him. . . .

I have begged her very earnestly not to allow any familiarity from men, which is very dangerous, especially in the country,† where they are so coarse as to pull people about, and sit down on a woman's bed (when receiving). Such manners as these must be avoided; and if you will take my advice, you will often leave her with Madame de Miossens, who will take care of her for my sake and your own.

She is altogether disorderly. She will breakfast at eleven, and eat no dinner. She must have preserves at collation, and butter at breakfast. [In a word, she is the ideal of the shop-keeping class, and just what is called a Paris gossip.]

She talks [like a market woman‡]; but that is the least of our inconveniences, for she will learn to speak good French. She seems to me to have a good idea of her appearance, [and her silly parents are quite capable of thinking her pretty, which, as I have told her, she is far from being]. She must be convinced of this,

* The bracketed phrases were cut out, probably for or at St. Cyr.—Geffroy.

† "En province."

‡ "À la Halle."

that she may not make herself ridiculous. Otherwise, she is quite right to make herself neat. She is of an age to deck herself in green and scarlet, and, if she neglected herself, would look very badly ; but she must not spend two or three hours every morning at the glass. [She has been very poorly fed ; yet, whether from childishness or ignorance of the price of things], or whether she has been given great ideas of us, she seems to think nothing of expense, and sends to me to ask for something or other every morning, as if it were the same to me to give her one gown or a dozen. I think, until she grows wiser, you would do well to make her an allowance. She would then learn how to manage, and would see that if she paid too dearly for a petticoat, she must go without shoes and ribbons. And another advantage would follow which is, that if you or I should wish to give her something, she would be obliged to us, which she will not be as long as she does not understand anything about expense or the state of our affairs, for she will always think we do not give her enough. If she were not now freshly dressed, and with a stock of everything, I should advise you to give her a thousand francs (£40) a year ; but as she has clothes for six months, I think eight hundred francs would be enough, and you and I could always make her some little present. You cannot think how many quarrels such precautions would prevent. She has gowns that would be out of season at Cognac, and only wants some thin ones. I will send her what she asks for, and I will get her to pay me regularly for what I do not want to make her a present of, for I should not like her to think she can take me in.

I am sorry that she has two waiting-maids.* Even if they should act as house-servants, which can never be done, it is absurd for that little woman to have two waiting-maids. But it is too late now to make any change.

I forgot to speak to you of a man who has been M. de Montchevreuil's servant for ten years. He is very faithful, and fit to be your steward ; an excellent man of business, who would

* "Demoiselles."

look after everything if he had a little boy under him. He was trained under the late Madame Montausier, and was servant to M. de la Bazinière.

[If you think you can be happy with your wife, use your discretion, and do not tire yourself with her. Take care not to do coarse things before her, and prevent her from doing the same before you] . . . Madame d'Aubigné seems to be a modest woman ; you must strengthen her in such good habits. . . . If she is discreet enough, and your house sufficiently orderly to have prayers every evening, be sure that you ought to set this example to your servants ; everybody has them here, and God will bless you if you serve Him. . . .

I beg of you not to let her see too much of Madame de Fontmort. She will turn her head, will talk of nothing but the Court, and make her think herself miserable at not being a lady-in-waiting. . . . Above all, do not see too much of her, lest you should weary of her. Accustom her to do without pleasure, and to learn how to stay in her room at work and reading good books. You will perhaps think it absurd that a woman who has never been married* should give you so much counsel and instruction upon marriage ; but I can venture to tell you that the confidence that has always been placed in me, and my experience of all that I have seen, show me that people often make themselves miserable about daily recurring trifles, which bring about real aversion in the end. I most earnestly wish you to be happy, and there is nothing I would not do to secure this.

With regard to your expenses, regulate them ; and be sure, my dear brother, that it is only our vanity that makes us needy. If you only wanted a good bed, what is necessary to eat, to be clothed suitably to your condition, one carriage to save going afoot, you, and so many others like us, would have amply enough. Your former station ought to make you enjoy the present, and

* This unexpected and often-quoted remark has perhaps contributed largely to the falsehood that Madame de Maintenon was never married to Scarron. It probably signifies that the marriage was nominal, and that her functions were those of a companion, secretary, and nurse.

should restrain that vanity of which I speak ; for you attract envy enough as it is [in all who have known you in want], without adding extravagance and airs which have brought down upon you a thousand ridiculous remarks. You have never been more laughed at than by the people to whom you have given magnificent dinners. . . . Every one has his fancies, and I am no more miserly than you, but I would have fifty thousand livres a year before I would have a footman like Madame de Coulanges, or a bed trimmed with gold lace ; for the pleasure they give her is not worth the ridicule they bring. . . .

This other letter from Madame de Maintenon to her brother, giving full details of the way of life and the prices current at that time, shows the extraordinary and minute administrative faculty which eminently survives among Frenchwomen.*

Versailles, September 25, 1679.

. . . You have done very well, and you cannot get rid of your horses too soon, for what they would cost to feed will serve you at Easter for drives and our journeys to Maintenon. My sister-in-law will not go out this winter, and four horses will be enough for you. . . . Your wife is not well, and is not now fit to receive, and she must have a good fire in her room, lights, jelly (of meat), and not many about her. In the summer there will be nothing of all this, and then she must have horses and footmen. I am telling you everything that comes into my head, not that you should bind yourself to it, but that you may adopt any of it that seems good ; and with the same intention I send you a plan of expenditure such as I should follow myself if I were not at Court, and upon which one can keep house. . . . I think to go to more than five hundred crowns for a house is too much ; for remember that it will only be for yourself, and that I should

* There is a common French saying that if a man is ruined and marries a Norman wife, he will die a rich man.

not sleep in it ten times a year ; that you want very few rooms, and two coach-houses, if possible. . . . The whole quarter of de Richelieu, of the Palais Royal, and the Louvre, and the whole of St. Honoré are very large (the houses). Do not hurry yourself as to time ; you can stay where you are as long as you like. . . .

These are the daily expenses for twelve persons (master and mistress, three women, four men, two coachmen, one valet) :—

						Livres. Sous.	
15 lb. of meat at five sous the lb.	...	...	...	...	...	3	15
Two pieces for roasting	...	...	...	...	...	2	10
Bread	...	...	...	...	...	1	10
Wine	...	...	...	...	...	2	10
Wood	...	...	...	...	...	2	0
Fruit	...	...	...	...	...	1	10
Candles	...	...	...	...	...	0	8
Tapers	...	...	...	...	...	0	10
Total						14	13

This is about your expenditure, which ought not to go beyond fifteen livres a day, one with another, or a hundred livres a week, or five hundred livres a month. You see that I add something, for one hundred livres a week would be only four hundred livres a month ; but when you add washing, pitch-torches, salt, vinegar, verjuice, spices, and small trifles, it will amount to that (five hundred livres). I reckon four sous (a day) for wine for four footmen and two coachmen, which is what Madame de Montespan gives hers ; and if you have wine in your cellar [in cask], it will not cost you three. . . . I put candles at one livre a day ; that gives eight : one in the anteroom, one for the women, one for the kitchen, one for the stable. I scarcely see where else they are needed ; but as the days are short, I put it at eight. If Aimée is a good manager, and knows how to fasten the candle-ends together, there will be a weekly saving of a livre. I reckon the wood at forty livres for two or three months in the year. You want only two fires, and let your own be a large one. Tapers at ten sous ; those at six to the pound will last you three days. Fruit thirty sous, as sugar is only eleven sous a pound, and you only want a

quarter of a pound for one compote. A dish of stewed pears and apples will last the week by renewing some old leaves under them, which would not cost ten sous a day. I allow two pieces of roast meat, of which one would be saved in the morning when the master of the house dines out, and one in the evening if the mistress is not at home for supper ; but I have forgotten a fowl to be boiled for soup. . . . In the morning, you would have a good soup with a fowl, when all the meat should be served with the soup in a large dish, for in that mixed condition it is excellent. Without going beyond the fifteen livres, you may have one day an *entrée* of sausages, another a sweetbread or loin of mutton, and in the evening the leg or shoulder, with a couple of good fowls. I forgot the roast meat for the morning, which should be a good capon or any other such thing you like, with the eternal pyramid* and stewed fruit.

With all this that I have deliberately set down, and that I have learned at Court, I am sure that your food ought not to go beyond six thousand livres a year. I reckon one thousand for Madame d'Aubigné's dress, and with what I give her she will certainly have something over. She has a year's clothing in advance, and has bought nothing since she married, unless I have been deceived. I reckon another thousand for servants' wages or clothes, a thousand for house-rent, though it will not be so much, and three thousand for your own clothes, for the opera,† and other expenses. Is not that fair? . . . If one word of what I have said is useful to you, I shall not regret my trouble, and, at all events, I shall have shown you that I know something of house-keeping. . . .

. . . Do not scatter yourselves all over that great house with so few servants. If I were you, I should do the cooking in the little hole near the room with the yellow bed. . . . Teach Madame d'Aubigné and her maids to know what I am like ; for though I am glad to lend, I depend upon nothing being spoilt or broken,

* Not specified of what.

† Scratched across in the autograph, perhaps at St. Cyr.

and I have given orders to Nanon to take a list of everything, from the velvet bed down to the pot-hanger.

Legros tells me that you have bought table-linen. You must have it marked, and take care that it is not changed at the wash. You must speak of all these things before Madame d'Aubigné, for she has the look of a plaster cast of which I should like to get rid.

CHAPTER V.

1679-1683.

BEING now entirely free, and more able to carry out what she thought right, Madame de Maintenon often conversed with the King, and besought him to break off his vicious intrigues. The King evidently took delight in her conversation, and put great confidence in her conscientious attachment to himself and his welfare. He sent her once to talk to Madame de Fontanges, who was in a state of fury, and on the point of making some public scandal. Madame de Maintenon urged her by every possible argument, but with great respect and judgment, to break with the King. Madame de Fontanges at last broke out, "But, madame, you advise me to give up a passion just as if it were taking off a chemise!"

While she was thus employed by Louis in difficult and distasteful matters, Madame de Maintenon was clear-sighted and resolute in her own small affairs. A characteristic letter to one of the two sisters De Guignonville, who looked after the house at Maintenon, shows this (1679):—

As I am very straightforward, and do not like to be put out more than can be helped, I would rather say it to you directly than to others, that I have to find fault with you, and that you and M. de Guignonville make a joke of all that I tell you [to do]. I sent

him word positively not to allow the square tower to be touched until I had made the bargain with him ; and to that he answers that they are working at it, and that it will soon be finished. I sent you word to distribute turf with Monsieur le Curé of St. Pierre, and you speak to him about it when the whole thing is done. These ways do not suit me at all, and I am too old not to be mistress in my own house. M. de Guignonville and you have been accustomed to manage Madame de Maintenon [the late marquise] like a child, but that is not my fancy at all. If you do not like to have orders from me, I will not give you any, and I will send to you only for money ; but if you still wish to undertake my affairs, big or little, you must, if you please, do them exactly as I wish to have them done. . . . I have sent to La Couture to give away the rest of the turf.*

A letter to Abbé Gobelin (1680) treats of very different matters, but with equal clearness and straightforwardness of mind. After giving a brief account of her almsdeeds, she says :—

As to my dress, I am going to change it, and wear the same as Madame de Richelieu. . . . I was clad in gold when I spent my days with the King and his mistress ; now I am going to belong to a princess, I shall always wear black. If I left the Court, I would dress like a convent portress, and the change would not trouble me the least. I have, in truth, spent too much [money], because I am naturally neat and very little given to saving. My days are now regular enough and very solitary. I pray for a moment on getting up ; I go to two Masses on days of obligation, and to one on week-days ; I say my office † every day, and when I wake in the night a *Laudate* or *Gloria Patri*. I think often of God during the day, and offer Him my actions ; I ask Him to take me away from here, if I cannot secure my

* A. Geffroy, “Madame de Maintenon d’après sa Correspondance Authentique.”

† The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin.

salvation, and otherwise I do not know what my sins are. I have that sort of morality and inclination to good that I do not do much harm ; I have a wish to please and to be esteemed that is a safeguard against passion ; so that I scarcely ever have deeds to reproach myself for, but very human motives ; great liberty of thought and judgments, and a restraint as to speech that is founded only on human prudence. This is pretty much my condition. Order what remedies you think most fitting. I cannot apparently think of retirement ; I must work out my salvation here.*

It is probable that Madame de Maintenon's wish to retire from Court had lessened imperceptibly (to herself) since her intercourse with the King had become a part of her daily life. Bussy-Rabutin wrote at this time that "no one was so agreeable to the King as Madame de Maintenon," and during 1680 and 1681 her favour with him steadily increased. He had now carefully watched her life for some time, and found a new continual pleasure in her frank, direct remarks and naïve and bright, yet pleasant conversation. Madame de Fontanges was finally dismissed from Court in 1680, bruised and broken in health and heart, and she died during the next year at the Abbey of Chelles.

There is no sort of doubt that from the fury and hatred of his mistresses, Louis XIV. turned with new eagerness to the refreshment of Madame de Maintenon's unsullied mind and friendship. As Madame de Sévigné wrote, she opened up to him an entirely new country, hitherto unknown — a friendship and intercourse entirely free and without deceit, with which he was quite charmed. And she adds the delightful word-play which must ever go untranslated, "The courtiers whisper that Madame de

* Geffroy.

Maintenon is Madame de Maintenant." She generally at this time spent two hours every evening with the King, and M. de Chamaran de "brought her in and led her away before the whole world." *

To the Abbé Gobelin she wrote towards the end of the year to beg him to go and see her before Christmas :—

Also, if you could get for me a bound New Testament, it would give me great pleasure. I should like to be able to carry it in my pocket; and if you think it well that it should be in several volumes, they would be more convenient. They must be bound in shagreen, with steel clasps; and an "Imitation of Christ," as well as the "Introduction to a Devout Life" † and your book for Mass. ‡ That will be all my library, which will not take up much room. They must all be in shagreen, with the same clasps. I beg your pardon for giving so many commissions, but my wish to do what is right will console you for the trouble. I am very well content, and even too content, for my salvation, for I do not know what my cross is.

Madame de Maintenon determined to turn her new conditions of too much well-being to good account, by trying to convert some of the Calvinist members of her family, beginning with the children of M. de Villette. M. de Villette himself at first resisted all the tempting offers that were made him if he would renounce Calvinism, and then Madame de Maintenon made use of some of those singular means that were warranted in the seventeenth century, under the idea that "all is fair in war." M. de Villette was induced to go on a long journey, leaving his son behind him. The young man was first persuaded

* Languet de Gergy.

† By St. Francis de Sales.

‡ Abbé Gobelin had written an exposition of the Mass, called "Brève Intelligence de l'Ordre des Cérémonies de la Messe."

to leave the navy and abjure Calvinism, and he was then sent to a school for the sons of the nobility. His sister, Mdlle. de Mursay (afterwards Madame de Caylus), was brought to Paris, with several of her cousins (de St. Hermine and de Caumont), and carried off by Madame de Maintenon to the Court, then at St. Germain. The child was so delighted with the beauty and splendour of the King's Mass in the Royal Chapel, that she was easily induced to be reconciled to the Church, on condition that she should be allowed to go to the Royal Chapel every day. At last, after being exceedingly angry at the forcible carrying away of his children, and the roundabout means used, M. de Villette himself consented to hear the arguments for the chief Catholic doctrines, and finally became reconciled to the Church. Madame de Maintenon was also much occupied with the King, who opened his mind more and more to her gentle and continual remonstrances as to his irreligious conduct, and to the light she threw upon the joy and peace of a good life, beseeching him to reflect upon the true glory of reigning over a happy and prospering people, and then passing to eternity as a saint. Little by little her clear and powerful faith as to the nature of God, of holiness, of sin, and of eternal happiness, awakened his own, and induced him to listen to the sermons and instructions of Père Bourdaloue,* Bossuet, then Bishop of Meaux, some of the Lazarist Fathers, and other spiritual teachers. Besides her constant prayers and daily efforts to induce the King to lead a really Christian life, Madame de Maintenon adopted

* The King listened willingly to his sermons, but it has been said of Bourdaloue, "Austère dans sa conduite et son caractère, il était cependant comme prêtre aussi indulgent que lui permettait ses devoirs."

the use of many bodily austerities, having a sincere mistrust of the comparatively easy and unruffled life she now led. She asked and obtained permission of Abbé Gobelin to use the scourge or discipline, and to wear a sharp girdle and armlets, unknown and unsuspected to even her most intimate friends. She continued the use of these austerities even to old age, when the Bishop of Chartres (Des Marais) forbade her to do so any longer.

It is evident that the poor Queen, Marie-Thérèse, was not the help to Madame de Maintenon with the King that she might have been. If she had been a pleasanter woman, and brighter in her intercourse with Louis, she might have preserved him from many falls. Madame de Maintenon alludes to this in a letter (1682) to Abbé Gobelin :—

If the Queen had a director like you, there would be no good that one might not hope from the union of the royal family ; . . . but there has been a world of trouble about the *médianoche*,* and to persuade her confessor, who leads her by ways (to my mind) fitter for a Carmelite nun than a queen.†

Meanwhile Madame de Maintenon had received an order from the King to transact all business and arrangements for his children in his presence, while many of the courtiers and Court ladies were watching maliciously, expecting every day to see her degraded to Madame de Montespan's place with the King. What communications passed between him and Madame de Maintenon at that time, it is not possible to say, as all the letters written to Abbé Gobelin upon this subject, and gradually leading up to it, were destroyed at her desire. By the destruction of

* The midnight supper for the communicants at midnight Mass.

† Geffroy.

these letters a most interesting psychological study has been for ever lost, for there is no doubt that her mind was transmitted to her director with the reality and accuracy of a photograph. She afterwards said that there is no greater triumph than to preserve irreproachable conduct in walking in slippery and crooked ways, and among people who, while flattering and fawning, are secretly watching for a fall. And there is no doubt that, intermixed with all her sincere zeal for the King's salvation and the well-being of the country, there was a powerful and essential strand of ambition to rule and to be a great centre of influence, unrecognized and in secret. But this was to be attained by lawful, never by unlawful, means. All through the extraordinary story it is evident that no amount of opportunity or temptation, no giddiness of flattery or seduction of pleasure, would ever have led Madame de Maintenon to lose sight of God and His laws, or to fall into the snare of giving herself up to be the mistress of the King. The final knowledge and certainty of this, no doubt, in the end trebled his attachment to her.

It is very difficult now to realize what then was the full scope of the work achieved by Madame de Maintenon in thus leading Louis XIV. to turn to a Christian life. France was then the head and front of Catholic Christendom, and was not only the cynosure of all eyes, but the source of influence to other powers. It is not an exaggeration to say that from the Pope down to the least and youngest *curé* in the French country villages, the whole ecclesiastical world was at that time rejoicing at the banishment of Madame de Montespan from her odious position. None of his illicit connections had done the King and the

nation so much harm as that, and the opposing influence of Madame de Maintenon had therefore a corresponding effect upon wholesome opinion and sympathy.

She herself was fully aware of this universal burst of regard among people who sought the King's real good, and she modestly observed that she had been far too much extolled (*glorifiée*) for what was due only to motives given her by God.

Yet in truth her services could scarcely be exaggerated, for Louis was now in his forty-ninth year, and there could no longer be a shadow of hope or excuse for "the follies of youth." He was not only the head of the State, but the very State itself, as he justly observed. His will and hand were the sole dispensers of good and evil, happiness and misery, to his twenty millions of subjects. He must be himself the example or the scandal to the most powerful Catholic nation in the world, and either lead his people to illustrate and vivify their faith by Christian living, or plunge them into practical unbelief by hopeless degradation and vice. Out of this slough, weakened and besmirched, Madame de Maintenon had been the means of lifting him; had brought him to recognize his condition, and to strive to be of a better mind; had in part rent away the veil of delusion—so common to men brought up by women—that made him figure as a new Zeus on Olympus, and had opened to him a knowledge of his duties as a Christian king.

This exceeding honour is due to her, and the renown of it should ever cling to her name. The greatest change that had come upon the Court was the cordial renewal of the pleasant relations between the King and Queen. Louis paid his long-neglected Queen such continual attentions

that she said she had never been so happy in her life. She repeated again and again that God had raised up Madame de Maintenon to be her friend and support, and that the return of the King's friendship was wholly owing to her good offices. But her great fear of her magnificent husband was unconquerable, and was sometimes shown in a very quaint way. Once, when the King was waiting alone to see her, the Queen besought Madame de Maintenon to go with her, as she should not know what to say. Madame de Maintenon courteously acquiesced, went with the Queen to the door of the room, and then, opening it, adroitly pushed her in and went away.*

Louis XIV. made good use of his newly found happiness by letting his people share it. He made several majestic "progresses" through the provinces which he had freshly acquired or enlarged, visited the ports of Flanders, Strasbourg, his most precious acquisition, Alsace, and Burgundy. At Metz and Brisach he established courts of jurisdiction, to which the Elector Palatine, the King of Spain, and the King of Sweden (as Duc de Deux Ponts) were summoned. Both the Elector Palatine and the Elector of Trèves vainly carried their complaints to the empire, and the absolute power shown by Louis XIV. at that moment in Europe led to Voltaire's remark, "Since Charlemagne, no prince has ever been seen to act in this way as the master and judge of kings." †

In these progresses the Queen and a brilliant suite of ladies, including Madame de Maintenon, accompanied the King, although the Dauphiness was obliged to remain at Versailles.

* De Noailles, "*Histoire de Madame de Maintenon*."

† Ibid.

This happy reunion of the royal family was heightened by the birth of the Dauphin's son, the little Duke of Burgundy, in 1682. All the events of the little prince's birth were most extraordinary, and it was miraculous that either the Dauphiness or the child survived. The King and Queen spent the night in her room, the King having ordered a mattress to be laid for him on the floor. As soon as the child was born, the King embraced its mother and the Queen, and went out to tell the news himself; and immediately the vehemence of joy brought such a crowd to the door, that it was forced open, and courtiers, ladies, and servants found themselves wedged together in the presence of the poor Dauphiness. The little duke was baptized in the same room a few moments afterwards, by Cardinal de Bouillon, the Grand Almoner of France, and then the Maréchale de la Mothe was brought in on a chair, received the child, and carried him away still on her chair to the room prepared for him. As soon as the King came out, everybody embraced him, or kissed his hands or his clothes, and Louis freely allowed them to do with him what they would.

The porters and Swiss guards completely lost their heads, and began to burn the poles of the sedan-chairs, the straw mattresses, and even the new parqueted flooring that had been stacked to lay down in the great gallery. When the King was told of this, he burst out laughing, and said, "Let them do what they like; we will get more parqueting."

The streets were soon full of bonfires, round which the people danced and sang for pure joy; the houses were brightly illuminated; the streets lined with tables, at which the inhabitants feasted everybody who passed by; and the road to Versailles became one moving crowd, going to the

palace to see the King, who never denied himself to them, and to clamour for the baby duke, whom Madame de la Mothe also took out into the balconies.*

Among the heart-stirring and really touching accounts of the joy shown by this then great people on account of their love for their kings, a very amusing incident occurred, but still springing from their essential loyalty. As there was as yet no settled body of tradespeople and shopkeepers at Versailles, the churchwardens of the parish told Bontemps, who had been made governor of Versailles, that they wished to offer their congratulations to the King on the Duke of Burgundy's birth. The King was propitious, and Bontemps ushered in his deputation.

He had got so far as "Sire, these are the shopkeepers of Versailles," when the head of the party, a grocer, whose name of Colette is worth recording, electrified by being actually in presence of the King's majesty, burst out in a loud voice with the chant after Mass, "*Domine, salvum fac regem;*" to which all the rest sonorously responded, "*Et exaudi nos in die,*" etc., which filled the whole room with the volume of sound.

The King, being utterly unprepared for such a salutation, burst into a hearty laugh, in which all present joined, except poor Bontemps, who drove the luckless deputation out of the room, scolding them lustily.*

In this same year 1682, Madame de Maintenon was happily occupied with settling at Rueil a number of young girls who had been placed by her under the charge of Madame de Brinon and her cousin, two Ursuline nuns whose convent had been wrecked by the Huguenots. They

* De Noailles.

had first been settled at Montmorency ; but the house was not large enough, and a much more convenient one was found for them at Rueil, where Madame de Maintenon also transported a detachment of poor children from some cottages at Maintenon. In her letters to Madame de Brinon she calls these "the little sisters." She was now maturing in her mind ideas which she was afterwards to carry out on a much larger scale at St. Cyr. The connection thus formed with Madame de Brinon lasted for many years. On New Year's Day, 1682, Madame de Maintenon wrote to her as follows :—

I give you good day, madame, and your dear cousin and all our house, and I wish with all my heart that we may do all the good that is possible. I can only furnish you with subjects, and you are giving your life, while my own is very pleasant and useless. . . . You will not have the Blessed Sacrament ; the King does not approve of it. The Archbishop would like to take away your crosses and the reciting of the office.* I have not wished to tell you this, lest you should be amazed ; but I want you to know that I do what I can. Your operas † will always be turned into ridicule by people of the world ; but they amuse me, and I quite enter into their usefulness to the little girls.

By the end of the year the house at Rueil had become to Madame de Maintenon a harbour of refuge from all her worries and anxieties. This is one of her notes to Madame de Brinon :—

December 14, 1682.

I beg you not to let any one know that I am going to dine with you to-morrow. I also ask you to make a little feast for me

* Madame de Brinon had apparently set on foot a kind of unauthorized community life and dress.

† Little plays composed by Madame de Brinon.

for our Sisters of the charity, and that I may see them dining in good order. You know I have always asked that nothing may be put out for me, and that they should not even see that I have come. I shall go at once to teach catechism. Do not come [to me] till you have nothing else to do, and treat me altogether as one of the household. I shall take my pullet with me, and we will eat it together. I am so glad to have a headache to-day, for that makes it almost certain that I shall not have it to-morrow.

Madame de Maintenon wrote a playful letter to her cousin, M. de Villette, early in the next year (1683), in which, in answer probably to some inquiries as to making her a present, she says :—

Versailles, January 30, 1683.

I always like scents, and do not care for any animal ; this is what you asked Madame de Mursay to let you know. She is very busy with her master ; not that I want to make her a blue-stocking, but that she makes use of him in this way when she could not be with me, and would only be learning nonsense with the ladies' maids. Instruments will give her some taste for music, dancing will give her grace, and she will speak French better for learning the rules of a language. She grows very fast, and I am asked every day for her hand in marriage [she was then twelve]. When that comes about in earnest, you will hear of it. She says she would like to be a nun, but that is not true.

To Madame de Brinon a little later she writes :—

March, 1683.

The first physician to the Queen, and the most skilful in all France [M. Fagon], is going to look after Jaquette [one of the little girls at Rueil who was ill]. Make use of the opportunity, and take his advice, which, joined to your own good sense, will make you manage the children well. I should recommend your furnishing that room that you have reserved at the gardener's, and put up in it two tent-beds for those who are the most ill, and begin by sending Jaquette there. The gardener's wife will most

likely be glad to earn what you would give, and you must make the bargain once for all, so as only to have the number of days to reckon, and the lodge-porters could carry them their food. You have reason to believe that our angels communicate with each other, for you answered my last letter an hour after it was written and seven or eight hours before it went.

The provisions given to Andrée, the examination of the pensioner's goods, and, in a word, everything that has taken place, gives me the greatest pleasure. . . . Courage! let us bring up children who will spread our good teaching when we are gone. I have nothing to ask but that you will put nothing out when I come, and that I shall take up what is doing instead of interrupting what is going on. Here is an apron for Andrée, which I beg you to give for me. . . . Abbé Gobelin is enchanted, edified, and entirely wrapped up in our community. . . . Good-bye, my very dear one. I love you with all my heart.

It was well that the King had been allowed to make his Queen happy during the latter part of her life, for on returning from Burgundy and Alsace she was seized with sudden illness, which her doctors did not seem to understand, and in three days she was dead. When he saw how ill she was, Louis left her room quickly with the Dauphin and the almoner, and went down to the chapel. There he ordered that the wax-lights on the altar should be carried with the sacred Host, to give the viaticum to the Queen, and followed himself with great devotion. When she had breathed her last, he said, with tears in his eyes, "This is the first grief she has ever caused me."

Madame de Maintenon, who had been unwearied in those days in her attention to the Queen, seeing that all was over, was going to her own rooms, when the Duc de la Rochefoucauld took her by the arm and drew her towards

the King, saying, "This is not the time to leave him, madame. In the state he is now he really wants you." She accordingly remained for a short time, giving him, in gentle words, all the comfort she could; and then de Louvois conducted her to her own quarters. The King immediately went to St. Cloud, where he stayed a few days, and thence went on to Fontainebleau, where Madame de Maintenon, in attendance on the Dauphiness, followed. She was clad in such deep mourning—then of a specially hideous character—and looked so sorrowful, that Louis departed from his usual good taste, and rallied her on her extreme tokens of affliction, which he himself could not pretend to feel.*

To mark his sense of the great good wrought by Madame de Maintenon, the Pope (Innocent XI.) sent her a *corpo santo*, a martyr's body from the Catacombs, whom, as is usual when the true name is unknown, he named St. Candida.† A great deal was said about so distinguished a mark of favour being sent to a private person, and that person a woman. While she was at Fontainebleau she wrote to Madame de Brinon about this:—

Fontainebleau, August 22, 1683.

I should have liked with all my heart to hide the gift I have received from Rome, for I am so extolled in this world for certain good intentions that I have received from God that I have reason to dread being humbled and confounded in the next.

The King had installed Madame de Maintenon in the Queen's rooms at Fontainebleau, which was certainly a strong measure to take; and he showed his increased respect

* De Noailles, "Histoire de Madame de Maintenon."

† Languet de Gergy.

for her by seeing his councillors in her presence, and asking her opinion upon this or that measure proposed. She had shown extraordinary agitation during the journey to Fontainebleau, and no doubt was much shaken by the conviction that this was a supreme moment for her as well as for the King. Mdle. de Mursay, who went with her, notes that she was entirely changed, and that all her fortitude and calmness were broken down. She scarcely heard what was said, and shed floods of tears. She excused herself to the other ladies of the party by saying that she had a fit of uncontrollable *vapeurs*, the conventional name for all hysterical attacks; and as soon as she arrived at Fontainebleau, got out of the coach, and went away into the forest with one attendant. And not only then, but for several succeeding days, Madame de Maintenon walked far and fast through the green forest drives, with only Madame de Montchevreuil as her attendant, whose amazement at such unheard-of proceedings at that day on the part of a Court lady must have been good to see.

CHAPTER VI.

1683—1685.

THE astounding remedies of so much fresh air and exercise wrought their usual cure, and Madame de Maintenon walked down her *vapeurs* so completely that they never returned again. But as she was revolving within herself her determination to quit the Court, and tread no more in its difficult paths, she received the following note from the King :—

God is punishing me, madame, and I submit to His will. I have given that beautiful soul [the Queen] only too much cause for complaint. Do not go away from us, dear Madame de Maintenon, for I need comfort. You can go when you are weary of telling me the truth.

This was her answer :—

Sire, the Queen is in no way to be pitied ; she lived and died like a saint. The certainty of her salvation is a great consolation. You have, Sire, a friend in heaven, who will implore God to pardon your sins, and ask the intercession of the just. May your Majesty feed upon these thoughts. Madame la Dauphine is better. Be as good a Christian, Sire, as you are great as a King.*

She wrote to Abbé Gobelin that her agitation of feeling had passed away, or at least all outward manifestation of

* Languet de Gergy.

it, and added the significant words : " Do not forget me in the sight of God, *for I greatly need the strength to make a good use of my happiness.*" There is little doubt that her marriage with Louis was settled during the visit to Fontainebleau, and that, although she scrupulously destroyed every letter that bore upon it, she told Mdlle. de Mursay that she had seen it to be her clear and positive duty to remain at Court, and that, *however circumstances might have changed for her*, her spiritual life was exactly the same.

Madame de Maintenon was now forty-eight years old—an age when much of a woman's charm has generally vanished. Yet every contemporary witness declares that she was still beautiful, even to the keen and coldly judging eyes of those who would gladly have witnessed her fall. They report of her that her voice was still as marvellously sweet, its gentle inflections as clear and pleasant, her brow as fair and open, the gestures of her delicate hands as full of natural grace, her eyes as bright, as in her early youth ; and that every movement of her well-poised figure was so full of graceful dignity, that she threw the most celebrated Court beauties into the shade. " Pallas-like, the first impression of her countenance is grave and severe," said one ; " but when she speaks and smiles, it opens and softens with a sunshine of its own."

It is abundantly clear, however, that what chiefly fascinated Louis was not any mere external beauty, but the graceful, pleasant goodness of Madame de Maintenon, and her rare delicacy in conveying counsel and reproof, which contrasted so refreshingly with the wearisome flattery that surrounded him on all sides. And also the King's mind was fully equal to grasping the steadfast purity of her

life, and her wide, yet temperate, aims for the welfare of France. Churchmen of great eminence testify abundantly to the solid usefulness of her influence, while expressing themselves in the elaborate complimentary phrases then in vogue. Fénelon himself says that in Madame de Maintenon "Wisdom spoke by the voice of the Graces;" while the Abbé Choisy notes that, by setting eternal things clearly before the King, she gained greater influence than if she had not despised earthly interests. Madame de Sévigné, as usual, summed up the circumstances in a few words: "Madame de Maintenon's position is unique. There never was one like it, nor ever will be again."

All France, indeed, stood in amazed and, as it were, breathless expectation of what was to come next. Here was the King, at fifty years old, who had hitherto lived rather as a pagan emperor than a Christian sovereign, returning to an orderly, strict, and edifying life, and occupying himself chiefly with the personal administration of his kingdom. And this marvellous change had been effected by the influence of the widow of a grotesque man of letters, a woman as old as himself, and whose one single charm, for him, was that she acted in all things from duty. It is an irreparable loss that Madame de Maintenon's letters to Abbé Gobelin during this time were destroyed, together with those received from him at this supreme crisis of her life, as well as almost every line written by Louis himself. This correspondence, over and above its historical interest, would have revealed the links of the most delicate intercourse, the most momentous and complicated temptations of a woman's life.

She might well say that it required the utmost courage

as well as caution to walk warily in such a course, for, as she records in one letter, she sent away the King after their conversations *always sorrowful, but never desperate*, and he returned to her again as his best and most faithful friend. Madame de Maintenon herself suffered very much, but her exceeding attachment to the King never shook her resolve to make no false step.

In 1684, Luxembourg was besieged by the French, and the King in person headed the army of forty thousand troops. He lodged at Valenciennes, and took with him the Dauphiness and her lady-in-waiting, Madame de Maintenon, with others, leaving them at Valenciennes when visiting his head-quarters. During the time when thus absent, he continually wrote to Madame de Maintenon, and one of her notes in return has been preserved. It lifts the veil for a moment.

Sire, a single day of your Majesty's absence is an age to me. I am satisfied as to your feelings, but I cannot rest in peace away from you. My whole happiness, all the pleasure of my life, lie in seeing your Majesty. Judge, then, what my anxiety is. After receiving so many benefits and honours from you, I know not even yet what my lot may be ; but I tremble with the deepest agitation while writing your Majesty this note.*

It was most probably during his absence from Valenciennes, and while he was more or less exposed to peril, that Louis XIV. took his final resolve to secure Madame de Maintenon as his friend and adviser for life on her own terms. Yielding to the urgent desire of the Dauphiness, who had also wished to secure her, he had offered Madame de Maintenon the permanent post of lady-in-waiting to

* Languet de Gergy.

that princess, just made vacant by the Duchess de Richelieu's death. Madame de Maintenon declined the exalted honour, for her sagacious mind told her that all half-measures and compromising dignities must be sacrificed at this momentous point of her career. She was most truly willing to give her life for the King's use and good, but it could only be done in the path of duty and by casting aside all minor interests and ambitions.

She was right, and she obtained her desire. In the very height of his power and greatness, in the utmost magnificence of his absolute rule, the greatest monarch of the greatest kingdom of Europe, with all his enemies at his feet, Louis XIV. turned away from the brilliant alliances offered him, to choose for his lifelong companion the subject who had dared to reprove him for his evil ways and counsel him for his eternal good.

A few days after the Court had returned to Versailles, probably on the 12th of June, 1684, and the historian distinctly says in the night, though there was Mass, seven persons were seen gathered in secret within the Royal Chapel at Versailles. These were the King, Françoise d'Aubigné de Maintenon, the Jesuit Père de la Chaise, who said the Mass, the Archbishop of Paris (Harlay), with the two marquises, de Louvois and de Montchevreuil, as witnesses, and the same royal valet,* Bontemps, who, as governor of Versailles, had introduced the churchwardens, and who now prepared the altar and served the Mass. No registry was inscribed of the marriage ; and, in fact, by

* Although holding the office of valet to the King, Bontemps was in truth rather the confidential friend than servant to Louis XIV., and was a man full of capacity in the management of affairs. Louvois was witness for the King, de Montchevreuil for Madame de Maintenon.

agreeing to this omission, Madame de Maintenon knowingly sacrificed her reputation for many years, in order to guard the secret for the King. She afterwards immediately destroyed every letter that could give proof of her being the King's wedded wife, and except to her confessor, to the Cardinal de Noailles, and to the Montchevreuils, she never afterwards spoke of her marriage. Before the final step had been taken, Bossuet and several other French bishops, and lastly the Pope,* had been consulted, and had decided that it was a good act, which sanctified the King's confidence in Madame de Maintenon, raised her influence to be a thoroughly lawful one, and was essentially for the general good of France. Arnault speaks of the marriage as an excellent act, binding the King to a person whom he must esteem. "Would to God," he adds, "that the directors of his conscience had never given him worse counsel!"

Madame de Maintenon, however, for a long time, reaped only the doubtful benefit of being "a riddle to the world," and even now, when her reputation has long been proved stainless, and her motives from her point of view most admirable, there is still much that will always remain difficult to solve in the character of this remarkable woman. Eye-witnesses of undoubted credit assert again and again that she never showed the smallest wish to be declared Queen. Probably even the outward apparatus of majesty would only have wearied and tormented her, and possibly she could not have borne to live in the midst of the envy and jealous grudging which such an astonishing elevation would have excited. It is, however, to be put down to the credit of the King, that at first he was thoroughly deter-

* Innocent XI.

mined to make the marriage public, and we must hope that this resolve sprang from an unselfish wish to clear Madame de Maintenon's name ; but she herself told her brother, M. d'Aubigné, that she would not permit him to do this, as it was so far above all her wishes and pretensions to assume such a position openly before the world. It is possible that she may have discerned that the mysterious, half-acknowledged marriage would have a certain fascination for the fickle mind of the King, and in many other ways she allowed him to heap what honours he chose upon her. He always addressed her as "Madame," with the most deferential affection, and the Dauphiness and the royal princes always spoke and wrote of her and the King as "the heads of the family." It followed as a matter of course that the Court, the Parliament, the chief cities, the provinces, and the army echoed the same voice ; and even the French cardinals and bishops preferred to approach the King through Madame de Maintenon. Foreign powers wrote to engage her good-will, and the Pope asked her to protect the nuncios and to interest herself in all matters concerning the Church and religion. Notwithstanding all this substantial honour, whenever there was a question of any great public ceremony or important foreign reception, Madame de Maintenon had no specially assigned place or precedence, and took delight in being lost among the other great ladies of the Court, a position which exactly fell in with her wishes. St. Simon relates how he saw her at Fontainebleau when the Queen of England* was there, giving place quietly to nearly everybody in the room ; courteous, pleasant, conversing

* Henrietta Maria, Queen of Charles I.

freely with all as one of themselves, yet taking no prominent part in anything, though treated with all imaginable respect. It was, indeed, not only a unique position, as Madame de Sévigné had said, but also a unique example of a woman without titles, rank, wealth, or any special family, having complete ascendance at a Court where these good things were wrestled for with absolute fury, and with whatever lawful or even unlawful weapons came first to hand. And what was more unique even than her ascendancy, was the fact that the fumes of such a sudden elevation never intoxicated Madame de Maintenon's brain. She continued to look upon herself, as she had always done, as if she were some one else. "I am not a great personage," she once observed to her friends, the Dames de St. Cyr; "I am only one who has been raised."

Another remarkable trait in her was that, in the constant presence of a Court rioting in personal luxury and boundless extravagance of splendour, Madame de Maintenon retained all her simple habits of modest thrift in dress. She continued to wear, says Languet de Gergy, some kind of damask or fine woollen serge, generally of a dead-leaf colour, without any of the trimmings of gold embroidery which were then profusely used, and, in fact, she was never so well dressed as many of the Paris shopkeepers' wives.

It seems impossible, indeed, to doubt that Madame de Maintenon had most truly married the King, as she had said, "for his salvation," and for the saving of the kingdom. She was grounded in the logical Christian belief that if the King purged his own life, and sought the help of God in prayer, he would be better enlightened how to govern his

people, and where to seek the only true glory of a king. A year or two later, Fénelon thus wrote to her :—

You should make it your business to touch his heart, to instruct him, . . . to give him views as to peace, and, above all, as to the relief of his people ; as to moderation, equity, a mistrust of harsh and violent counsel, and a horror of acts of arbitrary authority. In one word, you should be God's watchman in the midst of Israel, so as to forward every good and repress evil within the limits of your authority.

It was no small honour to a woman to be thus addressed by such a man, and it was no slight mission that he put before her. Like all true missions, it was also a heavy and costly burden, for the King's conversion was very slow in coming about, nor could it ever be called thorough and complete. His habits were too fixed, and Madame de Maintenon herself sorrowfully said that he neither knew how to humble himself nor be fully penitent, so that to the last he feared God and hated His punishments more than he loved Him and His laws. Most happily for Louis, his firm and genuine faith never failed him, and this stood him in good stead in the end.

In regard to this very point, the Bishop of Chartres once much encouraged Madame de Maintenon.

He has great faith, firmness in defending what is right, a good deal of conscience according to the light given, an upright heart, and much gentleness and wisdom. . . . I cannot believe that one for whom so much prayer has been made, and to whom God has given as by miracle so faithful and Christian a friend, should not become a new man. . . . Labour on in peace, watchfully and unfailingly, at this excellent work with which God has entrusted you.

Madame de Maintenon did, in truth, *labour*, and her whole future life might be summed up in the word. The selfishness of her Olympian Jove was so ingrained that he never seemed to conceive the idea of her being tired, and he claimed her advice, her judgment, her work, and her presence at all hours. "He loved me," she once said to Madame de Glapion, "*but only so far as he was capable of loving* ; for if they are not led by passion, men are not very tender in their affection."

Yet, with all that consummate sagacity and judicial keenness which judged men as if they were glass, Madame de Maintenon never varied in mood or manner with the irritable, passion-worn autocrat to whom she had bound herself and her life. At all times she was a friend ready to listen, a wife prompt to sympathize, a servant quick to do everything for his comfort, and, above all, a counsellor full of wisdom and resource, suggesting or upholding the right course to take, but without pretension or show of superiority.

She once said to the same friend, Madame de Glapion, that her way of life astonished herself ; for she was naturally quick-tempered, prone to flash out indignantly at others, and to give her opinion abruptly and without the least reserve, and now she was always under restraint. Mademoiselle d'Aumale records that she had continually seen Madame de Maintenon, when tired, anxious, and ill in body, entertaining the King with smiling pleasantness and numberless little inventions and interests, and conversing with him for three and four hours at a time, so as to keep him amused, absorbed, fascinated, without once yawning, and yet, most wonderful to say, without a single ill-natured or detracting word of others. Often, after such exertions,

when the King left her room at ten o'clock, Madame de Maintenon could only utter the words, "I have only time to say that I am quite worn out."

It was grudgingly said that Madame de Maintenon governed France, but, in truth, Louis XIV. never let the reins for a moment out of his own hands. He liked to read his letters and despatches in her room, and would often read aloud to her some part of the contents, and say what he thought he should answer or command. And then he would say playfully, "What does 'Reason' say to that?" or, "What does your Solidity advise as to this?" but in every instance making his own decision. Next to her first great consideration, the King's spiritual good, she bent her efforts towards inducing him to check his ruinous extravagance and waste of money, and strove to keep in view the sufferings of his people; but, unhappily, she did not really succeed in either of these great aims. Madame de Maintenon was twice present at a grand official council of the ministers, when her calm, serene face, as she sat rather apart at her spinning-wheel, must have been a contrasting picture to those of the ambitious and wily advisers of worldly schemes. She herself said that if she were forced to be often present at such meetings, she should die of the pain. "How bad men are," she observed afterwards, "and how much to be pitied are kings!" All she could do was to strive unweariedly to induce Louis to gather men of principle about him, such as de Beauvilliers, de Chevreuse, and especially Chamillart. When the latter was made minister, the people at the church doors in Paris said to one another, "For once there is a good man. He loves the people!"

In general, however, Madame de Maintenon restricted herself to bringing influence to bear upon religious matters, in which, though she did a great deal of good, she made some very serious mistakes, probably owing to the guidance or influence of others.

CHAPTER VII.

1685—1686.

THERE were works of practical usefulness undertaken by Madame de Maintenon that were far more congenial, and in which she wrought and enjoyed a large measure of success. Her marriage with the King had filled her hand with the power to carry out her long-cherished plans for the education of girls, and the household at Rueil, which, like Montmorency, had overflowed, was removed to the spacious château at Noisy, which the King made over to her use. He had it put entirely in order, and in 1684 one hundred poor but nobly born little girls were comfortably installed there, and were thenceforth to be styled “*damoiselles*,” to mark that they were of good birth. “These girls are more to be pitied in poverty,” Madame de Maintenon had truly said, “than those who are born to it and accustomed to its privations.” Abbé Gobelin was to continue the spiritual director of Noisy, and Madame de Brinon to be head of the house, but without Madame de St. Pierre, her cousin, who preferred going to a convent to continuing a life which gave her the idea of an uncertain compromise. Madame de Maintenon wrote her condolence to Madame de Brinon :—

September 26, 1685.

I am exceedingly sorry that the separation between Madame de St. Pierre and you should have taken place in my absence, for I should have hoped to comfort you a little for the sorrow which I quite understand. . . . I have already sent word to you to go out, and to divert yourself in every way that can lessen your pain. . . . I am aware that the life you have undertaken is austere ; but, in truth, I also think that there is something very delicious to a Christian woman in working unceasingly for God, and in not opening one's lips uselessly for the sake of His glory. I know of no occupation so noble as yours ; and when I think that you will have the greatest share in the institutions we are about to found, I envy you. . . . Good-bye ; I am going to hunt the stag with the King, who, thank God ! is almost as well as you could wish. Think, for your consolation, of a hundred thousand souls being converted in Guienne in one month [Huguenots who had been reconciled] ; that the town of Saintes has been reconciled by public declaration ; that my brother harangued Cognac [where he was governor] to induce them to follow this example ; that the King spends largely for restoring the churches ; that he is writing every day to the bishops to send out missions for instruction and relief ; that he has books for Mass distributed, which have a marvellous effect upon the people, who have been told that we do not wish them to know what the priests are saying ; that his Majesty orders that no expenses are to be spared towards reconciling the people ; and that those reconciled are to be relieved from taxation at his expense, so that Catholics shall not be overcharged. From all sides it is said that the effect of these things is miraculous. Is that not enough, my dear, to make you rejoice ?

She wrote at the same date, while at Chambord, to Abbé Gobelin :—

September 26, 1685.

I very much begged you to go to Noisy, and I had charged Nanon* to take you there. Your visit there is very much

* Mdle. Balbien, Madame de Maintenon's lady's-maid.

needed, and, whatever Madame Brinon's good-will may be, she and the others want counsel. I beg of you to send word whether it is absolutely necessary to make a novitiate before being received into our community, I mean now, when a quite new one has to be formed, for I am well aware that in the end the girls must make one year's probation, or two [years], if it is thought better. But just now, when there is no choir, ought they to make their novitiate? Under whom are they to make it? Can it be begun before the house is settled? Send me instructions upon these points, I beg of you; and if you are not as much at home in these matters as you are in many others, see some people who are living in community, and tell me what they advise. I think you would like me to send some news of the King. He is very well, thank God, and is rejoicing in all the couriers who come in bringing news of millions of conversions.*

During the next month she wrote to Abbé Gobelin again:—

October 10, 1685.

I am very glad that you are satisfied with what you have seen at Noisy, and you will do me a great pleasure by going again before the cold weather. I should like you to see all who wish to enter the community in private. I sent word to Madame de Brinon to examine them all, but not to begin anything for the novitiate till I go back. I have several reasons for that. She does not allow them enough liberty of conscience, and her well-grounded dread of the abuse of direction has made her restrict them to one single Capuchin, who never says a word to them. She thinks that the girls do not suffer, because they dare not complain; but, as they are very free with me, they make known their troubles.

For the future I hope to receive only girls brought up at Noisy, but we must take others now; all those that we have are

* General abjurations had been made at Bordeaux, Montpellier, Nîmes, and Lyons, which decided Louis XIV. to revoke the Edict of Nantes.

only children, who will not know how to govern for a long time [as class-mistresses, and fulfilling the offices of the house]. . . . I approve, as you do, of a year's trial for the girls ; but it seems to me that they would be much more useful if, instead of shutting them up in the novitiate to study their rule and to know their obligations only in theory, they should pass that year in the charges that they will afterwards fill, and especially in ruling and teaching the children, which is the foundation of their institution. I know that they must not be so entirely bound that they would not have time for prayer, meditation, silence, retreats, and conferences ; but there might be a mingling, which would prove to others and to themselves what they could do. Busy yourself, I beg of you, with this matter, as you hope that it will be useful, and because, as God and the King have laid it upon me, you ought to help me to do it well.

You cannot preach humility too much, both publicly and in private, to our postulants, for I am afraid that Madame de Brinon may instil into them certain ideas that she has of grandeur ; and that the neighbourhood of the Court, its being a royal foundation, the King's visits, and even mine, may give them notions of being canonesses and great ladies, which might puff up their minds, and be contrary to the good we wish to do. Other things, I think, are going well ; but we have to strike the mean between arrogance in our devotedness and the littlenesses of certain convents that we want to avoid. I do not yet know what we are to be called. If you have read the Constitutions, you will see that Madame de Brinon calls them " Dames de St. Louis," which certainly cannot be, as the King will not canonize himself, and, as he is the founder, he will give the name. I think she wants to call them " Dames," to distinguish them from the " Demoiselles." Tell me what you think. As to the habit, it will be black, rather like the dress that is worn, without hair or trimmings, such, I think, as St. Paul requires of Christian widows.

The King, however, being mindful of the fact, as, no doubt, Madame de Brinon had been, that he had an ancestor

already canonized, did eventually call the community, when formed, the "Dames de St. Louis." The King had spent thirty thousand livres on the house at Noisy, and had promised to pay the pensions of one hundred girls. In arranging the house, Madame de Maintenon carried out all her own spirit of economy, while providing largely for what was suitable and useful for her class of girls. The poor children, originally from Maintenon, were comfortably lodged in what had been roomy stables, and there they were trained to cook, sew, do the work of the house, and spin all the linen that was used.* Madame de Maintenon spent her happiest hours in what she called her "stables," catechizing and instructing the little girls while they spun, or reading to them and telling them suitable stories.

The long and disastrous wars in which Louis XIV. was engaged, now on one frontier of France, and now on another, had drained the chief nobility of their sons and of their means. The cadets of most of the noble families were posted in fortresses, or detailed in camps along the frontiers, exposed to the idle licence and general demoralization of garrison life, and the ruin of their fortresses and break up of their families severely threatened the continuance of the loyalty which the King had so conspicuously excited. It was suggested, partly by Madame de Maintenon, and partly by some of the more disinterested ministers, that military colleges for the sons of nobles should be opened along the frontier, where they could

* Madame de Maintenon had largely introduced the spinning of linen into the little town of Maintenon, and had brought in for the purpose a number of Norman and Flemish spinners to teach women in the best manner (de Noailles, "*Mémoires*").

pursue their studies in the interests of military duty, and repair the deficiencies of their interrupted education.

It was probably then that Madame de Maintenon's strong bent and real genius for education took its final shape at Noisy, and that she resolved to found a college for girls also, an institution where the daughters of the impoverished nobles should receive the full training and advantages due to their positions, and of which circumstances had deprived them; that they should be brought up in every way religiously, but with a more liberal education than was afforded by convents, and taught by women accustomed to move in the world to fill any position in which they might be placed with dignity and influence.

Thus the germ planted in the small house at Montmorency, and transferred to Rueil and Noisy, was now ripening to its full development at St. Cyr.

Meanwhile, Madame de Maintenon's eye was on everything, for, as she said to Madame de Glapion, who became one of her most eminent teachers :—

I know what the King's architects are, and how they will do their best to make everything beautiful, and their worst for our convenience. ~~Do not let the commonest bench or the smallest chair be thrown aside.~~ Everything will come in for our use.

The house was fitted up with large airy rooms for studies and dormitories, a pretty garden was tastefully laid out by Le Nôtre, and a chapel was added. The school was divided into four classes, which were distinguished by red, green, yellow, and blue ribbons for the hair and sashes, and the same division of classes and colours was afterwards maintained at St. Cyr. The girls all wore a uniform of brown serge, a small linen cap with a muslin border and

the distinctive ribbon, and the hair puffed and dressed in the prevailing fashion. There was a lace or muslin frill round the neck, and a little apron, trimmed with the same coloured ribbon as the cap. It was then thought to be a becoming dress, though quaint and somewhat savouring of the charity-school to our present ideas.

As to the education given, there was a thoroughly grounded and intelligent religious instruction, and a solid knowledge of French, in which Madame de Maintenon was a severe judge of style and purity of construction. There was a little music taught, and a great deal of needlework. Plain work of all kinds, knitting, lace-making, embroidery, tapestry, were all carried to great perfection. The elder girls even embroidered for the King a magnificent bed of crimson velvet with gold and silver, the coverlet of which is to be seen in the Museum of Versailles at this day. They also made a set of vestments for the cathedral at Strasburg, which was just then annexed to France.

Little wonder was it that Madame de Maintenon should say this was her "place of delight." She found time to go there part of every day, either visiting the children in the infirmary, or seeing the food cooked in the kitchen, and even sitting down to table with the girls, to see that everything was properly served. At other times she was present at the recreation, when she would practise the girls in their curtsies, their way of walking and greeting each other, and even in putting on a certain top-knot called a *fontange*. In a letter to her brother, she says, "Think of my delight at coming back along the avenue, followed by the one hundred and twenty-four girls who are there now!" In the same letter, she amuses him by relating that during that month

there were given out of the Noisy wardrobe "one hundred frocks, one hundred laces [frills], one hundred brushes and combs, one hundred pairs of gloves, *one hundred thousand* pins, one hundred caps, and one hundred top-knots, or *fontanges*." That very day she was going to take to Noisy one hundred and twenty-four copybooks tied with the crimson, green, yellow, and blue school ribbons, with counters of the same colours for the girls' marks; adding, "You will see by all these details how entertained I am, and I am sure you will not be annoyed by my telling you."

The great help and mainstay of the young institution, in its early stages, was the ex-Ursuline, Madame de Brinon. Afterwards, as Madame de Maintenon partly foresaw, her influence was found to savour of too much worldliness to have a good effect; but she was evidently a woman of great gifts and unusual resource. She was well bred and well born—not always inseparable circumstances—and being, for that time, well read, and having a great command of language, and graceful, polished manners, she was a living pattern to the elder girls of what they should strive to become. She was also extremely well taught in religion, and gave the full catechetical instruction to the school in the chapel. She catechized and explained so admirably, in fact, that not only Madame de Maintenon, but many of the ladies of the Court, came to Noisy to hear "the new Bourdaloue" from the outer chapel. The Court secret of the institution of Noisy, of course, leaked out like other secrets, and Madame de Maintenon was besieged by a polite mob, with petitions to be allowed to see the school. The favoured ladies who obtained their request, of course,

plumed themselves much upon it, and before long there was one universal whisper of what the education and "apostolate" of Noisy was doing for the general good of France. The Dauphiness chose to spend one whole day there, and coming back perfectly enchanted with the new excitement, so stirred up the King's curiosity, that he had his coach driven out to Noisy, with one or two carefully chosen gentlemen of his suite, on whose perfect propriety he could rely. When the royal coach drove up to the gates of Noisy, and the attendants clamorously cried out, "The King! the King! open the gates!" the portress looked through the wicket, but, though scared and trembling at her own boldness, said only that she would let the Superior know, and hurried away, leaving the King quite delighted at her perfect drill, and auguring from it the general good discipline of the house. He chose to be present at several of the class lessons, visited the chapel with the whole school, when his satisfaction was confirmed by the fact that not a single girl's head was turned to look at him, which was certainly a crowning triumph of discipline. When he next saw Madame de Maintenon, he told her how pleased he had been with the order of Noisy, and said that he should like to do something more for the institution. With great discretion and self-restraint, for her delight was extreme, she again put before him all the reasons for endowing the school munificently, pointing out the numerous instances that had come to her knowledge of the poverty-stricken condition of their noblest old families, and the neglected education of their daughters, upon whom the future of France, as to the state of its wives and mothers, so vitally depended. If the women of France were

ignorant, irreligious, and degraded, the consequences must necessarily be disastrous to the whole kingdom.

The King heard her with great attention; but on referring the subject to de Louvois, that great and almost autocratic minister threw cold water upon entering on fresh expenses, after spending so much upon costly wars. Louis himself felt that this was a just plea, and he added to Madame de Maintenon, "And there never yet has been any Queen of France who undertook such a thing as this."

But upon this vital point there was no yielding in Madame de Maintenon. Queen or no Queen, she knew her object and its magnitude too well to be driven from it by any obstacles. Without the slightest irritation, impatience, or undue insistence, she yet returned again and again quietly to the subject, reminding the King of all their former conversations upon the real good of the country, and its restoration to a sound state, and with heartfelt, yet respectful enthusiasm, declared that a thoroughly good education for women would of itself renew the whole kingdom to a solid Christian life.

Her victory at length was complete. Louis was not only convinced, but won, and he laid the matter himself before his council, where it was finally decided that funds should be forthcoming for receiving two hundred and fifty well-born young ladies into a sufficient house, where they should be lodged, fed, clothed, and taught up to the age of twenty years. Some suitable body or community of ladies should be entrusted with this education, for which special constitutions and rules should be framed, and consisting of thirty-six nuns or religious women, and twenty-four lay sisters to do the manual work.

The King's wish was to found this house in Versailles itself, but Madame de Maintenon wisely urged that it would not be well to have the girls exposed to the frequent visit of Court ladies and the dissipation of Court gossip, and Louis therefore ordered de Louvois and Mansart, his own architect, to make a complete search through the neighbouring country for a suitable house. They fixed upon the old abbey of St. Cyr, about three miles from Versailles, where there was good water, a great requisite in those days. But, excepting for this one advantage, it was not a good selection, and probably de Louvois never took heartily to the work, for the abbey land was bleak and marshy, and, though a great deal of money was spent in draining it and making it healthy, it was always damp and cold. Part of the land belonged to the Marquis de Brisson, and part to the ancient abbey of Benedictine nuns, said to have been founded by *le bon roi Dagobert*. Both the buildings and the nuns seem to have become moss-grown; but when the King proposed to them to buy their abbey and remove them to Paris, they raised a great outcry, and besought him to leave them in their undisturbed solitude. The imperious King was minded to carry the matter with a high hand, but Madame de Maintenon gently interposed, and begged that St. Cyr might not be founded upon any acts of harshness or possible pain to these aged women. The Marquis de Brisson's portion of the abbey lands, therefore, were bought for ninety-one thousand livres, and thus the school, or what we should now call the College, of St. Cyr became a royal foundation in the year 1686.

Mansart received the King's orders to build the house,

and Louis would have had it designed with great magnificence, especially the chapel. But here, again, Madame de Maintenon's gentle counsels of wisdom prevailed, for, as she said, "they did not want either a palace or a convent, but only large space for convenience," and that money ought not to be lavished upon outside show. Also, by one of those inspirations which shows the true genius of the King, he said that as the institution was intended to relieve the military nobles of France and the chief officers of the army, the army itself should be called upon to put a hand to the work. For then, as now, French soldiers were conspicuous for an aptness for many trades, and for handling tools well. There were chosen out, therefore, nine hundred bricklayers, four hundred carpenters, four hundred stonecutters, and so on, till an army of two thousand five hundred soldier-workmen was encamped about Versailles and Bouviers, and priests to say Mass for them, during the building of St. Cyr. For some unexplained reason, Mansart did his part very badly, and instead of building upon the slope of the hill, where the ground was dry, he laid his foundations at the foot of it, in the marsh, so that the building was continually delayed by the incoming water and the necessity for constant repairs. He also neglected to overlook the works, and carelessly allowed green wood to be used, so that in ten years' time the whole of the roof-trees had to be renewed. Probably he was annoyed by the sense of Madame de Maintenon's antagonism, for she mistrusted him, and said that he never dealt honourably with the King.

But while St. Cyr was building, as the French themselves say, *tant bien que mal*, the King's whole mind was

engrossed with the constitutions to be drawn up for the teaching community, and a note in his own hand, of which the fac-simile is still in the archives of the Préfecture at Versailles, shows his remarkable insight and sagacity.

CHAPTER VIII.

1686—1687.

HAVING taken this matter seriously in hand, Louis resolved to leave nothing undone to make St. Cyr a solid and permanent benefit to the country, so as to be as far as possible independent of the moods of his successors. He therefore made over to the foundation the seigneurie or lordship, with its rents and twenty thousand livres from other property not belonging. He also suppressed the title of the abbey of St. Denis, which had been of late chiefly held by unworthy hands, latterly by the notorious Cardinal de Retz, and obtained leave of the Pope to appropriate the revenues of the abbey to St. Cyr. Then, as even these rich endowments proved to be insufficient, a further annual sum of thirty thousand livres was assigned from the taxes of Paris to the new foundation.

The completion and furnishing of the interior of the buildings were happily left in Madame de Maintenon's hands. She herself, her steward, and her most perfect of French maids, Mdlle. Balbien, whom St. Simon calls "a half fairy," whom the royal princesses delighted to caress, and before whom even State ministers bent with profound bows, made all the arrangements and fitted up the house. They bought or fitted in beds, bedding, furni-

ture, carpets, hangings, linen, clothing, church vestments, books, and all the infirmaries appliances, at a cost of one hundred and fifty thousand livres. Madame de Maintenon was delighted to observe that there was not a single inch of gilding or marble to be seen throughout the house, except upon the altar of the chapel; while her tasteful arrangement of the four school colours in the various classrooms, wardrobe-rooms, carpets, and hangings, made everything fresh and bright, and gay as a parterre of flowers. One lady friend specially dilated upon the effect produced by the neat display of the girls' frocks, with their class-ribbons, in the open wardrobes, veritably making them "like the shops in the Palais." That meant the Palais de Justice, where the brilliant shop-windows then delighted the eyes of the Parisians.

All these details of arrangement and organization, so dear to the French mind, and so certain to be exquisitely complete, were yet only child's play to the weighty work of drawing up the constitutions and rules for the teaching community.

Louis XIV. was never a cordial friend to convents or nuns. Monastic life had not much attraction for him, and, as far as he was able, he had sought to lessen the number of religious houses in France. Nor, considering the sad and humbling details, so copiously recorded in his reign, of many of the abbeys and monasteries, is it surprising that he should take this view, or act upon it; for whatever his sagacious eye saw amiss, his strong hand must at once put down. The number of family "abbeys," both of men and women, had often led to appointments of ecclesiastics and the reception of nuns when only children and without the

slightest vocation to the life. Consequently, utter weariness and disgust had led to idle relaxation, profuse gossiping, foolish and injurious intercourse with the outer world, and the commission of much gross sin. And perhaps, beyond every other feeling, Louis held the education afforded to girls by most of the existing convents in utter contempt. The childish and inadequate books that were used, the exclusion of everything like literature, the multiplication of mere formal devotions, and the total ignorance of the duties and claims of life in which the girls were brought up, filled him with disgust, and he was at first firmly resolved that St. Cyr should never be erected into a convent, nor should the community established in it practise conventual rules, recite office, or wear a conventual habit. As there was to be much genuine teaching and the fatigue of watching over a great number of children, the way of life should be made reasonably comfortable and easy, without the austerities of a convent, and the women admitted to form the community would be required to be fully persuaded that their first duty was to bring up young ladies in the fear of God, and fitted in all ways to fill a distinguished position in the world.

Then came the great question of vows. Should they be simple * or solemn vows ?

The King inclined to the simple, Madame de Maintenon to the greater stability of the solemn vows ; and whatever may be thought of the unconventional spectacle of a couple of lay people sitting down to arrange the basis of a new

* Simple vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience are taken generally for a time, and can be dissolved by a bishop ; solemn vows are taken for life, and can be dissolved by the Pope only.

religious community, it must at least be conceded that they were far more widely and accurately instructed upon such subjects than the generality of men and women are now. Madame de Maintenon largely shared the King's feelings as to the idleness or silliness (*sottise*) of the generality of nuns, and was as fully averse to making over St. Cyr to any existing community or body. She therefore relinquished her desire for solemn vows, "because it was necessary to avoid the pettiness and narrowness of convents, and a community bound by solemn vows, isolated altogether from the world, would once more tend to bring up the girls with only a conventual education and manners." It seems that the matter was referred, at this stage, to Père de la Chaise, who supported this opinion :—

Girls are better brought up by people belonging to the [outer] world. The object of the foundation [St. Cyr] is not to multiply convents, which multiply enough of themselves, but to give well-educated girls to the State. There are enough good nuns, and not enough good mothers of families. St. Cyr will bring forth great virtues, and great virtues, instead of being shut up in the cloister, should be used to sanctify the world.

After this single ecclesiastical intervention, Madame de Maintenon and Madame de Brinon set to work together and drew up the constitutions of St. Cyr, the record of which remains as witness to the sagacity, good sense, and singular knowledge of the subject shown by all concerned in the work. It will hereafter be seen that essential modifications were made by the bishops consulted, and that Madame de Maintenon had cause to forego many of her most rooted prepossessions and repugnances.

When the sketch had been fully drawn out, the King

sent for Madame de Brinon to his private cabinet, where it was read aloud and explained, and the comments of the King were added. It is significant that the man's part in the business was that "he struck out, above all, the minute observances." The King was very much in earnest about the dress of the teaching body, who were, finally, to be distinguished as "Dames de St. Louis." This habit, which was to be "grave and modest, without being conventual," was sketched out by the two ladies, and, being then modified and retouched by the King's own hand, was worn at St. Cyr as long as he lived.

The Dames de St. Louis were never to be addressed as "Mother" or "Sister," but always as "Madame," with the family name. During the first year of the foundation, a gold cross was ordered to be made, and offered by the community to Madame de Maintenon, engraved with a motto by Racine, applicable, in the questionable taste of the day, both to the cross and the foundress of the house :—

"Elle est notre guide fidelle,
Notre felicité vient d'elle."

Madame de Maintenon gave this cross to Madame de Glapion when she became Superior of St. Cyr, and it was carefully handed on to her successors.

The new constitutions were sent to the Bishop of Chartres (Des Marais) and to Père de La Chaise, and afterwards to the Abbé Gobelin, to be read to Racine and Despréaux * for the correction of the language. Madame de Maintenon at the same time wrote most characteristically to Racine, begging of him "not to spoil the ideas and expressions for the sake of over-purity (purism) of

* Boileau.

language ; for you know," she added, "that in anything women write there are always a thousand faults of grammar, but, with your leave, there is a charm in them that is rare in the writings of men." It must have comforted her to find that both Racine and Boileau much admired the style of the constitutions as they were drawn up, only altering the turn of a few sentences. They were then sent to the Pope for his approval, which was cordially given. Letters patent were taken out, issued by the King to the "House and Community of St. Louis," and the terms of the ordinance that founded this great institution are full of dignity.

All the public acts of Louis XIV. are stamped with the same vivid sense of the inherent grandeur, power, and creative functions of kingship, and perhaps nowhere has this sense formulated itself in stronger or nobler terms than in these documents. So pregnant with life and reality are the repeated terms in which he speaks of the glory of that great kingship over a noble people, of the honour and responsibilities of the French name, and of the lasting consequences of a solid, elevated, and Christian education to the women of France, that his words should have power to stir up once more those grand traditions which now seem buried in sleep or death.

Thirteen articles were finally drawn up, arranging, besides all the regulations for the Dames de St. Louis, that two hundred and fifty "damoiselles" should be received at St. Cyr, from all parts of France, and fed, clothed, and taught, absolutely free of cost, provided that they were "noble" (able to prove four descents on the father's side), that their fathers had borne arms for France, and that they

themselves were not under seven or over twelve years old. The said damoiselles could remain at St. Cyr till the age of twenty, unless their parents arranged for them a marriage at an earlier age, or there were grave reasons for sending them home. No property or gifts of money were to be received by any of the dames or damoiselles, except from a king or queen of France, or "from Madame de Maintenon, whose care and labour had founded the community." If there happened to be any overplus from the revenues, dowries might be given out of it for marriages or vocations to a convent; but, in the latter case, the damoiselles must be received into the royal abbeys. Two Masses were to be offered daily in the house for the following noble and most touching intention :—

That it may please God to give Us and Our successors the necessary light to govern the State according to the laws of justice, and the grace of increasing His worship and exalting the Church in Our Kingdom and the lands and lordships under Our obedience, and to give Him thanks for the graces shed upon Us, upon Our royal house and Our dominions. Given at Versailles in the month of June, the year of grace 1686, and the forty-fourth of Our reign.

(Signed) LOUIS.
(And lower down) By the King. COLBERT.

The King offered Madame de Maintenon the title and honour, publicly given, of "Foundress of the House of St. Louis;" but, while expressing her deep sense of gratitude, she declined, as usual, anything that attracted public notice and praise to herself. Louis therefore drew up a brief, giving her the full powers, honours, and prerogatives of foundress in the community, and rooms and maintenance

for life in the house. With the Pope's approval, the Bishop of Chartres also instituted her the "spiritual superior" of the House of St. Louis, though it is not quite clearly indicated what functions the title embraced, probably those of supervision and appeal. Abbé Gobelin was made the ecclesiastical superior of the house, and M. Delpech the first administrator or bursar for the temporal affairs. A coat of arms was also blazoned for St. Cyr, a cross *semée* with fleurs-de-lys, surmounted by the royal crown.

Meanwhile Madame de Maintenon was closely occupied with the teaching department, which was to be the core of the work. She examined and chose out several of the steadiest and most promising scholars at Noisy, and a few young ladies that she knew who were attracted by the work of teaching, and of these she formed the nucleus of a kind of noviceship, under Madame de Brinon's care, for nine months' probation and study. They were carefully trained in the theory and practice of teaching, in the duties of the house, retreat, prayer, conference on religious subjects and their special life, and the nature of the three vows to be thereafter made. In these instructions Madame de Maintenon seems personally to have taken great part, and throughout the whole story of St. Cyr we become aware of a largeness of view and depth of knowledge and sagacity in the ecclesiastics and women of the seventeenth century that would be far to seek in our own day. One of the young probationers, Madame de Pérou, says that it was very much urged upon them in these instructions to be upright, straightforward, and very true and simple in all their dealings, for this was much and continually insisted on by Madame de Maintenon.

When the nine months' probation was at an end, the candidates were examined by the Grand-Vicar of Chartres, who chose out four for profession. These four, therefore, took the three simple vows, and a fourth vow to educate girls. Madame de Maintenon gave them the veil, cross, and cloak, after which they were ranked as choir-Dames, with power to add to their number. They accordingly elected eight others; and these twelve, with Madame de Brinon as superior and Madame de Loubert as her assistant, formed the first community of the Dames de St. Louis at St. Cyr.

There was no lack of publicity in establishing the new royal foundation. From all parts of France applications for the admission of girls had poured in, and a crowd of the daughters of impoverished nobles and high officers of the army had been brought to Paris and lodged in the various convents, to be examined as to their qualifications by the King himself, especially with regard to their genuine poverty and the reality of their "four descents." When this considerable business of two hundred and fifty qualifications had been made out, an extraordinary ceremonial took place at Noisy. The whole of the royal coaches, crowded with glittering lacqueys and escorted by the Swiss Guard, followed the ecclesiastical procession, bearing the cross, with many banners, and the relics of St. Candida. The *Veni Creator* was intoned; the whole way from Noisy to St. Cyr was lined with eager crowds of spectators, and it was a general festival for an enormous concourse of people.

The Dames themselves record that when they entered the house at St. Cyr, they felt "as if they had come into

paradise." The vast, fresh rooms and corridors, the high, airy dormitories, with their spotless beds, and the gay and tasteful colouring of all that met the eye, delighted even the most fastidious critics. The bedsteads painted in the four colours ; the hangings of the same tints ; the vast stores of exquisitely arranged house-linen, which are traditionally said to have lasted for fifty years ; the walls covered with bright maps, bookshelves, and pictures, arranged with neatness and symmetry in order to form the taste of the pupils, were indeed a pleasure to all eyes.

Madame de Maintenon herself said, "What gives me such pleasure in looking round these walls is the knowledge that here I see my refuge and my place of burial." It was well for her that she possessed such superabundant courage and strength, for the young community was so unformed and so terribly ignorant that she was obliged to bear the burden of the whole house on her one pair of shoulders. Every other day it was found necessary for her to be at St. Cyr from six o'clock in the morning till six in the evening, going from class-room to class-room, from kitchen to infirmary, where she alternately nursed, washed, and dressed the children herself, and showed each one in charge how to do her work.

It was also found necessary to bring in some of the Sisters of Charity (St. Vincent de Paul) to give lessons in nursing and making up and mixing medicines, and some ladies from an Ursuline institution to teach the classes properly. Madame de Maintenon herself gave lessons to the young Dames in writing and spelling, as well as in keeping up order and discipline without harshness. She might well say, towards the close of her laborious life, that

she was "able to swallow any amount of praise as to her gifts for education, for she was sure she knew a great deal about it." She was very much helped at that time by a friend, who afterwards brought her much trouble, the Chanoinesse Madame de Maisonfort, and by her devoted maid, Nanon Balbien, who turned out to be an excellent bursar and steward. Unfortunately Madame de Brinon did not prove so satisfactory at this stage of affairs, and as she was the only nun of the company, her failure was the more unexpected and regrettable.

Either she had never had or had lost her special vocation, and had become intoxicated with the King's approval and with her elevation to be superior of the new royal house. It is certain, in any case, that she acquired an inordinate love of worldly, gossiping society, began to pose as a great lady, and even as an "abbess," and did a vast amount of mischief by her example in the house. Just now it is undeniable that the train of visitors of high degree were enough to upset even a strong brain. The troop was headed by that august personage, second only to Louis himself, Mdlle. de Montpensier, the "Grande Mademoiselle" of France; and next, in a sort of ironical contrast which is very saddening, the disgraced King's mistress, Madame de Montespan, who could not restrain her curiosity to see with her own eyes what her supplanting former friend had done. Probably the advent of both these visitors had been made known beforehand to Madame de Maintenon, as, for different reasons, she wished to avoid receiving either. At any rate, she did not go to St. Cyr on those several days. But she was there to receive with open arms her own old special charge, the Duc du Maine,

then sixteen, who warmly expressed his boyish delight at being initiated into the mysteries of the great unknown world of a girl's school. Then followed "all the other princes"—royal, of course ; and next the great Court ladies, bishops, and prelates of high birth and name.

All this time the King was laid up with serious illness, and it was September * before he was able to pay that culminating visit for which all St. Cyr was impatiently, nay breathlessly, waiting. It came at last ; and Louis, accompanied by the Mesdames de Maintenon, de Montchevreuil, and de Gramont, was met in the courtyard by clergy and cross-bearer in full state, and at the doors of inclosure by Madame de Brinon, who, still "the new Bourdaloue," pronounced an address of her own composing, with the Dames behind her in their long, trailing cloaks, and with lighted tapers in their hands. When the King reached the noble central corridor, all the school was there, drawn up in two lines, dressed in full uniform, with eyes modestly cast down, and in mortal terror lest any unbecoming, *inconvenable* gesture should mar the effect.

The magnificent King passed very slowly down between the lines, and those eagle eyes scanned the demeanour of his damoiselles very keenly, while the *Te Deum* was being chanted, and the whole *cortège* entered the chapel, where the ceremonial ended with the "*Domine salvum fac regem.*" The girls, then, led by their class-mistresses, filed before the King, each making her profound and much-practised curtsy, and passed out into the garden. When the King shortly afterwards joined them there, he was deeply moved as the burst of bright, fresh young voices went up in the

* St. Cyr was opened in July.

anthem, so spirit-stirring to us all, and which was a household sound for more than a hundred years at St. Cyr :—

“ Grand Dieu, sauvez le Roi !
Grand Dieu, vengez le Roi !
Vive le Roi !
Qu’à jamais glorieux,
Louis victorieux,
Voye ses ennemis
Toujours soumis.
Grand Dieu, sauvez le Roi !
Grand Dieu, vengez le Roi !
Vive le Roi ! ” *

After visiting the class-rooms, dormitories, and infirmaries minutely, and pointing out several things still capable of improvement, the King gathered the young community about him in their own common room, and discoursed to them admirably upon the responsibilities and importance of education, specially observing that it is one of the greatest austerities that can be practised, inasmuch as it is lifelong and can never be relaxed.

Then he took leave of them, smiling graciously as he passed again the crowd of young, bright faces that his own hand had gathered together from all parts of France, and took his seat in the coach. For the first time, then, Louis, who, as St. Simon notes, “was always master of himself and his countenance,” gave way to his deep emotion, and, bowing profoundly to Madame de Maintenon, said, “I thank you, madame, for the pleasure you have given me to-day.”

* The controversy regarding the originality of this famous cantique cannot be entered upon here. Whether Handel first heard it at St. Cyr in 1721, and borrowed it for George I., or whether the French borrowed it from “God save the King” cannot be argued. The Dames de St. Louis attributed the melody to Lulli.

In striking contrast to this visit, and certainly a wholesome reminder, was the death and burial, a few days afterwards, of one of the community. It was a young novice who had been ill at Noisy, and who now, after the last sacraments and the unfailing ministrations of Madame de Maintenon at her bedside, made her happy end. The school again collected in the long corridor, kneeling with lighted tapers as the processional cross and the train of clergy passed, and followed the bier to the pretty burial-ground outside the chapel. For more than a hundred years afterwards, many an innocent child and many a faithful and aged worker in the vineyard followed that novice, the firstfruits of the community, and took their place round the great stone cross of St. Cyr.

That solemn and beautiful burial-ground was desecrated and despoiled at the Revolution of 1793, till it became only a sordid, dreary field, without a single indication to show where the dead lay.

CHAPTER IX.

1687—1690.

THE study of Madame de Maintenon's life and character should not dwindle to a history of St. Cyr, but as it is certain that this institution grew more and more to be entirely the heart of her life, and an oasis of refuge from her wearisome toil, it is not out of place to follow its development. And it is the more interesting, because in regard to it Madame de Maintenon not only made serious mistakes, but humbly retrieved them, which is not very common with highly cultivated and fastidious women. Her great aim was, as has been seen, to avoid the scanty, superficial education then afforded by convent schools, and the narrow, unreasoning, external devotions inculcated by the nuns. The instruction at St. Cyr was to be "large, solid, wide of range, free, and suitable to the tone of general good society." The girls were therefore encouraged to a good deal of choice as to their studies, their modes of recreation, and their intercourse with each other and their mistresses. Everything was done to train them to look at things from a wide point of view, to aim at a lofty standard, and to free themselves from minute details, too rigid observances, and anything like vulgar and narrow prejudices.

Manners, personal habits, and language were strictly

scrutinized, and even their tastes in dress were cultivated. "Beauty is one of God's gifts," said Madame de Maintenon to them, and she therefore encouraged the girls to add their own fancies and little vanities to the school uniform. She herself made them presents of ribbons, laces, beads, and many other pretty things, saying that "she liked to see her girls even a little *coquette*," and growing up to adorn such society as she herself had charmed in the *salons* of her own early years. She watched her girls' conduct and conversation with one another as the most careful mother would have done, and reproved gently all displays of temper, caprice, idleness, or self-seeking vanity. Her whole teaching aimed at forming a noble, reasonable character, which should help them as girls to sift out their foolish pride and vanity, and make them upright, generous, tender women, forbearing and useful to others.

It was, in truth, a most beautiful and elevated plan of education; but its very largeness contained within itself failure, as it always must where large numbers of young people are congregated together, and bad and good fish narrowly inclosed in the one net. After some years it was found necessary to introduce at St. Cyr much more restraint, and a large amount of alterations and restrictions were eventually added to the original rules.

The world of letters, meanwhile, owed much to St. Cyr, for to it is due the creation of Racine's grand and touching dramas of "Esther" and "Athalie." The gift of language had been so cultivated in France during the seventeenth century, that it may almost be said to have been perfected. The contrast between the ordinances of Louis XIV. and the letters of the women of his reign, and the speech and

spelling of the rule of our own William, Mary, Queen Anne, and the first Georges, is indeed humiliating. In the conversation of the *salons*, language was polished to the finest brilliancy, without degenerating into foppish or feeble effeminacy. It is as brief, pregnant, and nervous in St. Simon, Madame de Sévigné, and Madame de Maintenon, as it is witty, sparkling with enjoyment, and full of point. Madame de Maintenon was determined to secure this most true and rare accomplishment of language for St. Cyr.

Racine notes that she obliged the girls to write compositions as conversations upon their various duties, the events of the day, or the subjects of their reading, upon which she commented and made corrections. They learnt by heart and recited fine passages of poetry and plays, and during the summer months Madame de Maintenon spent much of the day in the gardens at St. Cyr, sitting under the trees, and calling up first one group or class of girls and then another, to hear them recite or to relate to them scenes of her past experience in society, and opening their minds to historical events, anecdotes and sayings of eminent people, and passages of poetry. Madame de Brinon, fired with emulation, then conceived the idea of composing for the school tragedies of her own, "exceedingly edifying," and chiefly on Scripture subjects. But Madame de Maintenon finding both her ear and her taste sadly disturbed by these fine plays, she gently begged Madame de Brinon to lay them aside, and to confine herself to the lighter subjects of Corneille and Racine, herself carefully looking through the plays to be given. The girls were allowed to have "Cinna," "Andromaque," and "Iphigénie," put into their own hands, but

after acting the whole of "Andromaque" before Madame de Maintenon, she thus wrote to Racine :—

Our little girls acted "Andromaque" yesterday, and acted so well that they shall never do it again, nor any one of your plays.

But while thus earnestly bent upon shielding her flock from the pernicious stirrings of latent passions, Madame de Maintenon yearned for some further means of expanding and enlarging their repertory of ideas, and to serve as more serious and engrossing recreations, especially for the elder girls, who during their last years at St. Cyr, when they were between the ages of sixteen to twenty, began to find the school routine extremely monotonous and wearisome. She had also much at heart the imminent danger of throwing young women, helplessly innocent and unwarned, into the evils of the society of that day, as this was one of the chief dangers after the existing convent education was completed. She consulted Racine, and urged him to undertake for her girls some dramatic composition, mingled with music, the subject of which should be religious. Racine felt that to come down from the creation of his world-known tragedies to a school-girl's play was too great a descent to ask of him, and he, in his turn, took counsel of Boileau, who at once advised a flat refusal. A flat refusal to Madame de Maintenon was, however, too serious a matter to be ventured upon, in view of the King, and Racine plunged into Biblical researches, and fell upon the Book of Esther, which at once seemed to promise him good opportunities.

To begin with, there was the splendid figure of the king in all his power, and the two queens, which would

give scope for many delicate and flattering allusions. He threw together a few scenes and read them to Boileau, who was amazed at their beauty and promise, and became as keen an advocate now for the play as he had before urged against it. Racine next carried his sketch to Madame de Maintenon, whose acute mind at once seized its value, and urged him to finish the play as soon as he could. There was the framework of the Greek chorus in Racine's mind, which he felt could be adopted satisfactorily in "Esther," and would open effectively to the pupils the fuller appreciation of the scope of the Greek drama. In a few months' time the great play was actually completed, and Racine at once, with the help of Boileau, went to St. Cyr and cast the parts of the tragedy. It is impossible to over-estimate the culture and general enlightenment to the girls during the training that followed under such direction.*

The prologue was given to Madame de Maintenon's niece, Mdlle. de Mursay, afterwards Madame de Caylus,†

* The names of the chief actors in "Esther" were carefully preserved. *Esther*, Mdlle. de Veilhenne; *Assuérus*, Mdlle. de Lastic; *Mardochée*, Mdlle. de Galpion; *Aman*, Mdlle. d'Abancourt; *Elise*, Mdlle. de Maisonfort. Five of the principal actors afterwards became nuns.

† Mademoiselle de Mursay, afterwards Vicomtesse de Caylus, was a granddaughter of Madame de Maintenon's Huguenot aunt, Madame de Villette, and was thus her niece only according to the reckoning of relationships in Brittany, being the daughter of her first cousin. Her beauty, and still more her extraordinary grace and charm, won the heart of M. de Boufflers, afterwards Duke and Marshal of France. But Madame de Maintenon, true to the last particular to her virtue of *moderation*, when M. de Boufflers made his petition, answered him in these words: "Sir, my niece is not a match good enough for you, but I feel what you have done out of regard to me none the less, and I shall always look upon you as my nephew."

Madame de Maintenon took special charge also of another granddaughter of Madame de Villette, Mdlle. de Sainte-Hermine, who also married (the Comte de Mailly) from St. Cyr.

It was most grievous that, after all the love and care lavished upon her,

then just seventeen, who afterwards played in the part of *Esther* before the King.

There never was (says St. Simon) so *spirituel*, so touching, so speaking a face, as hers; never such freshness, such grace, or such mind; never such gaiety or charm. Never was any creature so bewitching. . . . She surpassed all the most famous theatrical actresses, and surpassed even herself when acting *Esther* in presence of the King.

Madame de Maintenon was most anxious at that time to wean Louis XIV. from his love of costly and ruinous public spectacles, to which he had accustomed himself, chiefly as a distraction to that terrible disease of *ennui*, of being weary of his life from having exhausted all its sensations and experience. She was determined to make the entertainment at St. Cyr such as he would both approve and relish. "Esther" was therefore splendidly got up and put upon the stage. The dresses were all of silk (very costly then), and set off with very good paste and genuine jewellery and gold. The scenes were beautifully painted by Borin; the King's own musicians were in the orchestra; and Nivers, the musical professor, accompanied on the harpsichord. The theatre was arranged on the second floor of the house, at the top of the grand staircase, which ended in a spacious landing, divided for the occasion into stage and auditorium. The community and school filled three tribunes, and the girls were ranged according to their own colours. The whole theatre was lit with large chandeliers in the pretty old style, with cascades of falling lustres that multiplied the lights of the wax candles.

Mdlle. de Mursay's marriage was one of the worst that she could have made. The Vicomte de Caylus was a rake, a spendthrift, and a drunkard, and his wife was obliged to leave him.

The splendid preparations, with all the excitement and confusion they involved, no doubt precipitated the necessity for many of the fast-approaching restrictions in the schools, and it is sad to have to relate that before the great climax of the representation of "Esther" in the royal presence, the "new Bourdaloue," her sermons, her tragedies, and her theology, had all vanished from St. Cyr. Madame de Brinon, served with a *lettre de cachet*, had been deposed, and had gone away,* and there was scarcely time to regret the loss, for the breathless announcement was made that the King had fixed the day for witnessing the representation of "Esther" by the school. To be exact upon so momentous a date, it was January 26, 1689, at two o'clock in the afternoon. Again the gold-liveried outriders and runners preceded the glittering coaches, and pealed at the gates of St. Cyr, and this time Louis was accompanied by the Dauphin, the Prince de Condé, the Bishops of Meaux (Bossuet) and Chalons, and a circle of the discreetest gentlemen of the Court. An arm-chair was placed just a little behind the King's seat, on one side, for Madame de Maintenon, that she might conveniently answer all his questions and attend to his remarks.

The representation was an immense success. The

* Madame de Brinon's character, long discerned with such perspicacity by Madame de Maintenon, had rapidly deteriorated while superior at St. Cyr. She assumed a great haughtiness of manner, arrogated the position of being the only exponent of the rules, and led the elder girls to a tone exactly opposing that which Madame de Maintenon had laid down. There was no weakness of temporizing in her when this had become clear, and the *lettre de cachet* was acted upon so swiftly and quietly, that Madame de Brinon was many miles on her journey before her departure was known. She finally retired to the abbey of Maubuisson, where the Princess Palatine was superior; and there, in the high society she truly loved, and in a learned correspondence with Leibnitz and Bossuet, she found and ended her natural career.

King was absorbed throughout, enchanted with the pure flow of the exquisite verse, the perfect young voices and their harmonious enunciation, the exactness of the chorus, and the delicate allusions to himself and his victorious wars. When it was over, he spoke even warmly of the pleasure it had given him to the community, to the actors, whom he playfully called round him as his "young daughters of Sion," and to Racine himself, who, with his simple and characteristic piety, had gone to the chapel door, to pour out his fervent thanksgiving that all had gone so well. In fact, the King could speak and think of nothing but "Esther," and the whole upper society of Paris raised one unanimous petitioning cry to be allowed to witness the play at St. Cyr. Madame de Sévigné wrote, "The play or tragedy of 'Esther' has been acted at St. Cyr. The King thought it admirable. M. le Prince (the Dauphin) shed tears. Racine has never done anything finer or more touching. There is a prayer of *Esther* for *Assuérus* that quite carries one away. I was rather disturbed that a little girl should act that king, but they say it was very good."

At the next representation there were present, besides a large royal party, eight Jesuits and the celebrated Madame de Miramion, whom Madame de Sévigné calls "a mother of the Church." On that occasion Madame de Caylus acted, and filled the part of *Esther*. Four more representations followed, and the little girls had become so full of the play and their parts, that they used to kneel down behind the scenes and say some prayers that they might make no mistakes. By this time St. Cyr and "Esther" had become one of the chief interests of the Court circle, and bishops, State ministers, men of letters, wits, and Court beauties

alike, clamoured for admittance. The King's consideration was so great for Madame de Maintenon and the community, under these extraordinary circumstances, that he stood one afternoon himself at the inner door of the auditorium, barring the entrance with his cane, till all those whose names were on the list had passed in.

The last representation of "Esther" had the pathetic interest of being witnessed by our own unfortunate James II. and his admirable queen, Mary of Modena, who had been generously lodged in the palace of St. Germain by Louis XIV., and treated with great kindness. There were then three crowned heads among the audience, and there was also Madame de Sévigné, whose account of the event, so often told, bears to be told again :—

The King, with that air of being at home which gave him even a too charming sweetness, came towards our seat ; and when he had turned, said to me, "Madame, I am sure that you have been pleased." Without being taken by surprise, I replied, "Sire, I am charmed ; I feel more than I can put into words." The King observed, "Racine has great talents ;" and I said, "Sire, he has ; but, indeed, these young people have also a great deal [of talent], for they enter into the matter as if they had never done anything else." His Majesty replied, "That is quite true ;" and he left me an object of envy, for, as I was almost the only one who had not been there before, the King was rather pleased to see my real admiration without fuss or parade. M. le Prince and Madame la Princesse (Dauphin and Dauphiness) came to say a word to me, and Madame de Maintenon gave me a lightning flash as she went away with the King. I made each of them an answer, for I was in good cue.

That same year Madame de Maintenon wrote to Abbé Gobelin :—

July 27, 1689.

Do not make yourself uneasy about St. Cyr ; everything there is going on wonderfully. . . . Piety increases every day, and it is cultivated in a way that ought to make one hope it will not be a passing fervour. To-morrow is the Feast of St. Anne and the birthday of our superior [Madame de Loubert]. She will entertain the whole house. This is how relaxation and work are mingled. I am perfectly satisfied. I am not so much satisfied with myself, and our dear Dames leave me far behind them.

Another letter of that year to one of the Dames shows Madame de Maintenon fulfilling her office of spiritual superior of St. Cyr :—

1689.

I shall keep your questions for M. de Fénelon.* . . . He is writing something for me—and consequently for you—now ; but in the meanwhile I cannot help telling you that there are many things in the letter I gave Madame la Chanoinesse [de Maisonfort] which will answer what you have asked me. That abandonment to God's will, that perfect indifference to any sort of employment, provided that these employments belong to our duties and state of life ; the certainty, if we leave for His sake what seemed to bring us nearest to Him, that He will be with us and accompany us in all our actions ;—this confidence, I say, ought to give great peace to those who live in a large community, and wish to fulfil their duties without being distinguished from the others. They will fulfil those duties very perfectly if, after offering up in the morning, the whole day, and placing themselves again from time to time in the presence of God, they preserve this peace and spirit of indifference. They will go with the same good-will to visit the blue-ribbons,† or to go about the house with a workman ; it will be equal to them to receive the doctor and to mix the medicines ; and this indifference as to one occupation or another will not hinder their doing their very best in each, leaving success in the hands of God.

* Fénelon had that year been made tutor to the Duke of Burgundy.

† *Les bleues*—the elders or upper class, so distinguished.

As to thoughts, it seems to me that there is a sure rule for knowing whether they come from God, which is to see if they lead us to our duties. If they disgust us with them, and would persuade us that other duties are better, then most certainly those thoughts are not from God. . . .

Madame de Maintenon still continued to correspond with Madame de Brinon, and to speak of St. Cyr and her other interests :—

February 22, 1690.

We are settling the missionary priests [the Lazarist Fathers Brisacier and Tiberge] at St. Cyr. We have a bishop [of Chartres], and a holy bishop too. We are obliged to build for the missionaries ; we have the consent from Rome. You see how much all this occupies me, without counting the business indoors. I gave your letters to the Chanoinesse [de Maisonfort] to distribute. She is more devout, more absent, more delightful, and giddier than ever. Mdlle. d'Aubigné is very pretty. She is old for her age, a very good girl, well taught, and full of her religion. These are all the news of St. Cyr.

That from Versailles is good, for the King is wonderfully well. His health and his devoutness grow stronger day by day, and piety has become the fashion. May God make it real in all those who profess it ! We are going in a week's time to Compiègne, which I could well dispense with ; but we learn every day from a number of holy people whom we sometimes see that we must renounce our own way, and do God's will with a good heart. Mdlle. Marsilly * makes out that this is what they do at St. Cyr ; but you know we could find out that it is older than that. . . .

Madame de Maintenon took the greatest interest in this Mdlle. d'Aubigné, her brother's child. She was put under the special charge of Nanon Balbien, who chiefly taught her herself, under her aunt's careful supervision. After her school life she was married to Comte d'Ayen,

* Madame de Villette, and then Lady Bolingbroke.

son of the Duc de Noailles. On her approaching marriage, Madame de Maintenon wrote to the superior at St. Cyr :—

Recommend Mdlle. d'Aubigné heartily to the prayers of all the house, and ask of God rather to take her out of this world than that she should imbibe its spirit. The King has made her a great lady ; may it please God to make her a good Christian !

The new Bishop of Chartres (Des Marais) was appointed chiefly by Madame de Maintenon's influence. He had been a poor priest of St. Sulpice (the Sulpicians were beginning to create a new spirit of zeal and piety among the French clergy), who was much amazed and exceedingly averse when he learned the dignity that awaited him. He proved to be a most excellent and valuable bishop, and was a firm and useful friend to Madame de Maintenon as long as he lived.

That same year the Dauphiness died. The marriage of the Dauphin to this princess, the daughter of the Elector Ferdinand of Bavaria and Adelaide Henriette of Savoy, which had promised so much, had not been in any way successful. The Dauphiness shut herself up generally with a German waiting-woman, called Bessola, with whom she talked German, even when "Monseigneur" was present, who did not understand what was said. Her sons were the Duke of Burgundy, the Duke of Anjou, and the Duke of Berry. The Duke of Anjou became eventually Philip V. of Spain. Madame de Maintenon wrote on the occasion to the Duc de Richelieu :—

Marly, May 1, 1690.

You will have learnt the death of Madame la Dauphine. Every one had been long prepared for it, but we did not think it

would come so soon. Please God that she herself was not taken by surprise. She showed piety and courage. The King saw her expire, after praying for an hour at the foot of her bed. You will have heard of the pension he gives Bessola. There is already a talk of Monseigneur marrying, who has felt more than he has shown. Good-bye, Duke. The world passes away and we are passing away with it. The right thing is to think of this. You know it better than any one, and I do not know what you have not taught me about these things. I do not forget those happy times. . . .

She wrote to M. Manceau, her man of business, or agent, at Maintenon at this time, a letter so full of characteristic touches and suggestions that it is worth giving entire. Madame de St. Bazile, of whom she speaks, had been with Madame de Brinon at Rueil, and left to become the superior of the Hospitalières in the Rue Royale, where, as Madame Scarron, Madame de Maintenon had once lodged.

1690.

All that you have said to Madame de St. Bazile is right, and according to what I wished. I strongly approve of your being at the meeting on Saturday as representing me. It is known that I wish to support the house, and my position scarcely allows me to do any good works except at the sound of the trumpet. Take notice of this, in order that what is given should be given thoroughly well; and in working with Madame de St. Bazile, suggest to her plain, straightforward, and simple methods of management. She is well-inclined, but people become spoilt by seeing others act in a different way. It is not enough understood what an art it is to have nothing to reproach one's self with, nothing to hide, and nothing to fear. Even worldly honour would give these views; but we must carry them further, and do everything for God. Do not grudge your time; it will be well spent, and you know well how to give it to Him Who alone is worthy to be served.

CHAPTER X.

1690—1692.

EARLY in 1691 the King went to join the army then besieging Mons, but before he left he went to St. Cyr, where Madame de Maintenon was to remain in strict seclusion while he was away. The Dames de St. Louis were assembled to receive him, and he said to them, indicating Madame de Maintenon, "I am leaving you the dearest thing I have." She wrote continually to him, as well as to the Dauphin and the Duc du Maine, who accompanied the King. All the letters of the two last are preserved at Versailles and Mouchy, but of the King's only two little notes remain. The whole series of Madame de Maintenon's are lost.

These are the King's notes :—

April 9, 1691,

Half-past one in the morning.

'The capitulation is signed, which ends a very great affair. To-morrow I am to have one gate by noon, and the garrison will go out to-morrow, Tuesday. Return thanks to God for the favours He has shown me. I think you will be pleased to do so.

Ten o'clock in the morning,

The camp before Mons.

I am writing this note not to lose the ordinary [the daily courier], for I shall soon send off Delisle, who will take you what

I think [necessary] for your journey. I am going to visit part of the army to-day, and shall be ready to set out on Thursday morning to reach Compiègne on Saturday evening, when I shall have the pleasure of seeing you. I hope it will be in good health.*

During this time of solitude and welcome repose at St. Cyr it is generally supposed that the well-known prayer was composed, which bears in itself alone amply convincing evidence of Madame de Maintenon's real ties with Louis XIV. :—

O Lord my God, Thou hast placed me where I am. I desire to worship during all my life Thy providential dispensations towards me, and I submit myself to them without reserve. Give me, O my God, the grace fit for the state to which Thou hast called me, that I may bear in a Christian way its weariness, that I may sanctify its pleasures, that I may seek in all things Thy glory, that I may uphold that glory before the princes among whom Thou hast placed me, and that I may minister to the King's salvation! Let me never give way to the trouble and restlessness of an unquiet mind, which grows weary and slackens in the duties of its state, envying the fancied happiness of other conditions of life. May Thy will and not mine be done, O Lord! The one single good of this life and the next is to submit to that without reserve. Fill me with that wisdom and those gifts of Thy Spirit which are needful to me in that high station in which Thou hast bound me, and make those talents fruitful which Thou hast bestowed upon me. Thou who holdest the hearts of kings in Thy hand, open the King's heart that I may instil into it the good Thou desirest; and grant that I may please him, comfort him, strengthen him, and even afflict him, when it shall be for Thy glory. Grant that I may never hide from him what he ought to know through me, and which others may not have the courage to tell him. Grant that I may be saved with him, that I

* Geffroy.

may love him in Thee and for Thee, and that he may love me in the same way. Grant us to walk together in Thy justice, without reproach, till the day of Thy coming.*

Surely no loving and faithful wife ever breathed a nobler prayer!

Her duties, incessant as they were towards the King, did not in any way hinder Madame de Maintenon from fulfilling those to St. Cyr. She organized a council, consisting of the superior, who presided, the assistant, novice-mistress, and general mistress of the school, which met every fortnight to deliberate on the rules, education, discipline of the house, and general spiritual well-being of the Dames. The King appointed an extra council for business, which was placed under the superintendence of some prudent statesman. Madame de Maintenon rarely missed assisting at the house council, and was much occupied during the early times of the foundation with making arrangements for those girls who, having reached the age of twenty, could not be returned upon the hands of destitute parents.

The King was therefore induced to fund a sum of sixty thousand livres, from which each girl of twenty who was destitute could receive a dowry of three thousand livres, that she might either marry or enter some convent. Every effort was made to save from the house expenses for this end, so that something could be added to the three thousand livres. The King also persisted in retaining his *régales*,† about which he was always at variance with Pope Innocent XI.; and he thus appointed to the royal abbeys girls who had been brought up at St. Cyr. Each of the

* Geffroy.

† Certain rights in the royal abbeys.

girls who left was provided with two good, quiet gowns, and a supply of under-linen.

Upon Madame de Brinon's departure there had been a canonical election for a superior. Madame de Brinon had been appointed for life, which was a vital mistake, but the King's authority in her case was sufficient to set that aside, as the house was not yet constituted under any obligations of canon law. But as there was now to be a valid election, and, according to the decrees of Trent, the Dames were not of sufficient age to elect, the bishop (Chartres) gave a dispensation, and Madame de Maintenon as spiritual superior assembled the chapter, but took no part in the election. Madame de Loubert was then elected unanimously for three years, and the choice was universally approved.

The King was delighted, for he knew that Madame de Maintenon had carefully trained this lady, who had been associated with her also at Court, and whom she thoroughly knew. He drove to St. Cyr one day to take Madame de Maintenon to drive and walk, as he often did, and, going into the parlour, sent for Madame de Loubert to congratulate her. He assured her of his regard and protection, and of his great satisfaction at her election. Madame de Loubert replied to his flattering courtesy with a modesty and quiet self-possession that charmed the practised eye of the King, and proved her to be a worthy pupil of Madame de Maintenon.

The annexation of the abbey of St. Denis to St. Cyr had not been accomplished without difficulty. Certain bulls from Rome were granted to religious houses, in return for which certain annates were yearly paid by the

houses to the Holy See. When any such house was to be suppressed at the sovereign's wish, and its bulls withdrawn, a lump sum had to be paid to the Pope as compensation. The compensation sum for withdrawing or cancelling the bulls for St. Denis was fixed at eighty thousand livres, and Innocent XI., who seemed generally to be at odds with Louis XIV., positively refused to allow the annexation of the abbey. He died, however, in 1689, and Alexander VIII., who succeeded him, was most anxious to heal all the breaches with France, and as one of his first acts accorded the permission for St. Cyr.

Moreover, when the French ambassador, the Duc de Chaulnes, was told to notify the Pope's favour at Versailles, he was also instructed to say that it was granted, not only on account of the great services done by Louis XIV. for the faith, but in recognition of the efforts made by Madame de Maintenon for education, and on account of her general good influence in France. The Duc de Chaulnes wrote to Madame de Maintenon himself, saying, "The Pope twice commanded me to let you know that consideration for you had a large part in his granting the favour." The King insisted on carrying the whole account of the transaction to St. Cyr himself, and this visit is so characteristic, and so eminently distinctive of France at that time, that it must be related in full, as it stands in the annals of St. Cyr :—

The King favoured us by coming to announce it himself [the annexation of St. Denis]. After doing us the honour of saluting us with his usual goodness, he said, "Mesdames, I bring you good news. The newly elected Pope has granted me the necessary bulls for uniting the abbatial house of St. Denis with yours. The news reached me to-day, and you shall have it set on foot

after my journey to Fontainebleau. I should like to be the bearer myself. . . . In the whole course of this establishment I have had in view only the glory of God, the good of the kingdom, and the help of the nobles. I conjure them [Madame de Maintenon and the Dames de St. Louis] in God's name to second my views, by grounding themselves more and more in true piety and in all the virtues and observances of their institute. Then I shall have no anxieties as to their good education and care of the young ladies. The chief point in this good work is that all the Dames should be firmly rooted in the perfection of their state [of life], or, at least, should continually tend towards it. I hear every day what gives me pleasure on that point." Madame de Maintenon replied, "It is impossible that there should not be good nuns of St. Louis after such solid instructions." The King made answer, "I am not eloquent enough to exhort them well; but I hope that by dint of repeating to them the motives for this foundation, I may be able to persuade and induce them to be always faithful in carrying them out. I shall spare neither my visits nor my words, however little useful they may be, to bring about this good result."

Madame de Maintenon then gave the King several interesting details, both of the community and the children; on which he observed, "I am not surprised to find so much virtue among ladies who have wholly consecrated themselves to God, and who ought to be wholly occupied with perfecting themselves and giving a good example to the whole house; but what I admire, and what edifies me exceedingly, is to find the same piety in young ladies who are still only children."

Madame de Maintenon then said, "You ought not to regret, Sire, all you have spent upon this foundation, since it has turned out so happily for God's glory." "Far from regretting it," the King replied, "if it were all to begin again, I should do the same with all my heart." Madame de Maintenon went on, "We cannot flatter ourselves that, out of so great a number of girls who will be here, none of them should stray from the paths of piety and virtue

in which we strive to make them walk ; but it will make it difficult even for those, considering the holy maxims and virtues impressed upon them, not to recollect themselves, and return to their duties as true Christians. But that which ought to give your Majesty great pleasure is that no doubt the greater number [of these girls] will live and die in innocence, and that a quantity of them will consecrate themselves to God." The King then replied, " Ah ! if I could only give back to God as many [souls] as I have robbed Him of by my bad example ! " *

The annexation of St. Denis was followed by essential changes in St. Cyr itself. The commission, or council, appointed for the necessary arrangements consisted of twelve eminent men, under the presidency of the bishop of Chartres. Three other bishops, one of them Bossuet, Abbé Fénelon, and several laymen in high office, constituted the council, and the final result of their labours was not only to annex the abbey of St. Denis, but to erect the House of St. Cyr itself into a convent, and make the Dames de St. Louis a regular religious community under solemn vows.

This was no slight work, for, as has been recorded, Madame de Maintenon, as well as the King, was strongly opposed to the change ; but upon a careful understanding of the lasting and certain benefits to be looked for, and the inevitable and exceeding dangers of an uncertain and indefinite community, Abbé Gobelin ranged himself on the council's side, and urged Madame de Maintenon to yield her own wishes. The King was very loth to consent, on account of what the world would say as to his changeableness about his favourite institute ; but in the end his magnanimity conquered, and he said, " The world will say that we have taken our measures badly, but that does not

* *Languet de Gergy.*

matter ; we must act for the greater good, and let men say what they like."

Several of the Dames, however, felt a great reluctance to bind themselves to solemn vows, especially when they learnt that they would be required to go through a complete novitiate a second time. Those who had real objections were offered the alternative of leaving the community, which they did ; but the greater number valiantly put themselves into Madame de Loubert's hands for the appointed probation.

Madame de Loubert was fully equal to the task before her. She gathered the community together, laid before them the great merit to be gained by courageous self-sacrifices, and, kneeling down on the floor before them, begged pardon of all her flock for the faults she had committed as their superior, and laid down the office. Such women as these were certainly worthy of a thoroughly religious training, and Madame de Maintenon wisely made choice of some Visitandines, the holy and gentle daughters of St. Francis de Sales and St. Frances de Chantal, to train the community. The Visitation convent at Chaillot, not far from Paris, was then governed by Mother Priolo, a woman much esteemed for her holy life and spiritual knowledge ; and to her Madame de Maintenon now applied to act as novice-mistress at St. Cyr. Mother Priolo was exceedingly averse to undertake the charge, which was a far more difficult office than Madame de Maintenon discerned. She knew thoroughly the Visitation training and spirit, but the women she was now asked to train were not to become Visitandines, whom she knew, but Dames de St. Louis, whom she knew not. In the end, however, Madame de Maintenon

prevailed ; and, with the condition that she was still to conduct her own community, Mother Priolo chose two nuns from Chaillot to accompany her, and took up her abode at St. Cyr. This was in the year 1692.

It is necessary, even at the risk of being tedious, to go back to the previous year, to show why it was that Madame de Maintenon had become completely convinced that there were faults at the very root of the spirit at St. Cyr, and that she herself, with the best motives and intentions, had fostered and intensified these very faults. The nature of that spirit also explains other grounds of Mother Priolo's reluctance to undertake the novitiate there. In 1691, Madame de Maintenon wrote to one of the Dames (Madame des Fontaines) these words :—

September, 1691.

The trouble the girls at St. Cyr have given me can only be healed by time and a total change in the education that we have given them up till now. It is just that I should suffer from this, as I more than any one have contributed to it, and I shall be very happy if God does not punish me more severely. My pride has spread through the whole house, and its root is so strong that it overbalances even my good intentions. God knows that my desire has been that virtue should be established at St. Cyr ; but I have built upon the sand, not having that which alone can make a solid foundation. I wished the girls to be clever, that their hearts should be enlarged and their understanding formed. In all this I have succeeded. They are clever, and they make use of their talents against us. Their hearts are lifted up, and they are prouder and haughtier than would become great princesses, even speaking as the world speaks. We have formed their understanding, and have only produced a set of talkative, presumptuous, inquisitive, and daring girls. And so it is that we succeed when we act out of a wish to excel. A simple, Christian

education would have produced good girls, out of whom we might have formed good wives and good nuns, and we have produced a set of pedants,* whom we cannot endure ourselves. This is our misery, and I have had more to do with it than any one. Let us come now to the cure of the mischief, for we must not be discouraged. I have already proposed some remedies to Balbien, which may appear to you very slight, but, with God's grace, I hope they will not be without effect. For, as several little things foment pride, several little things will destroy it. Our girls have been too much considered, too much caressed, too much humoured. We must forget them in their classes, make them keep the regular order of the day, and not speak much of anything else. They must not think I am displeased with them; it is not their sorrow that I want, for I am much more in the wrong than they are. All I want is to repair the evil done by a contrary course. The good girls have shown a greater excess of the pride that needs correction than the naughty girls, and I have been more scared by the arrogance and audacity of Mdles. de ——— and ——— and ——— than of all that has been told me of the rest of the class.† They are well-intentioned girls, who wish to become nuns; but with these intentions they nevertheless speak and behave with such haughtiness and audacity as would never be tolerated at Versailles in girls of the highest rank. You see by these tokens that the evil has become second nature, and that they do not see it themselves. Pray to God to change their hearts, and give us all humility; but, madame, you must not say too much about it to themselves. Everything at St. Cyr turns to talk. . . . Do not speak to them either about pride or raillery; they must be destroyed without a battle. . . . Their confessors will speak to them about humility, and much better than we. Do not let us preach to them any more. . . . We have wished to avoid the littlenesses of certain convents, and God is punishing

* *Beaux esprits.*

† "All that has been told me of the *libertines* of the class," in the original. This was probably suppressed, as in the eighteenth century the word had acquired another meaning than in the seventeenth.

us for this pride. There is no house in the world that more needs humility, both outward and inward, than ours. Placed so near the Court, its size, its wealth, its high position, sense of the favour that pervades it, the caresses of a great King, the attention of a person of credit [herself], the example of vanity and worldliness that is given by her in spite of herself by the force of habit, are all such dangerous snares that we ought to take very contrary measures to those hitherto adopted. . . . Let us ask continually of our Lord to change the depths of our hearts, to take from our house the spirit of loftiness, of mockery, of subtlety, of curiosity, of freely judging and advising upon every subject, and of meddling with the offices of others at the risk of wounding charity. Beg Him to take from us our fastidiousness and impatience at the least discomfort. . . .

During the next year, 1692, Madame de Maisonfort, the Chanoinesse so often spoken of and so much loved by Madame de Maintenon, finally made up her mind, through a forest of difficulties, to enter the community of St. Cyr, but to bind herself only by the simple vows. It was Fénelon who finally decided her to this step, perhaps hoping that her restless, versatile, somewhat capricious mind would become calmed and strengthened in community life. Madame de Maintenon was overjoyed at this step, little foreseeing what pain and anxiety the Chanoinesse would eventually cause her. She wrote to her immediately:—

February, 1692.

I cannot tell you, madame, the joy I feel to see that it has been decided for you to stay at St. Cyr, and I could not wait till Tuesday to tell you so. Be now at peace. I have felt what pain you were in during these last days. Give yourself to God and to us with a good heart and great courage to work for your own sanctification and for that of others. How happy you are to be able to offer and give yourself effectually at this very time of the

offering made by the Blessed Virgin ! [the day after the Feast of the Purification]. It is very difficult to me not to envy you for flying so high, while we drag ourselves along in God's service, and think we are doing a great deal when we do not fall headlong down the precipices which we everywhere see. Good night, my very dear one ; you must soon be my daughter, for every day I become more and more your mother.

The King soon afterwards carried away Madame de Maintenon to a very different side of life. He took the command of the army besieging Namur, and Madame de Maintenon and several other ladies, and part of his usual suite, accompanied him. The ladies were all lodged at Dinant, not far from Namur. From there Madame de Maintenon wrote the following letter to Madame de Veilhan at St. Cyr :—

Dinant, June 2, 1692.

If one could conscientiously wish for a nun outside her convent, I should like you to see the warlike places through which we are passing just now. If one could change one's nature, I would assume for the time that warlike character which makes you love powder and cannon. You would be enchanted, madame, at smelling nothing but tobacco, at hearing nothing but drums, at eating nothing but cheese, at seeing nothing but bastions, demi-lunes, counterscarps, and touching only such rough and coarse things as are most contrary to the sensuality above which you are raised by your courage and inclinations. As for me, who am so very womanish,* I would gladly yield you my place, to be working tapestry with our dear Dames. I hope to have that pleasure soon, and that Namur will prefer to surrender rather than be wholly ruined.

You think of nothing but the war, and do not tell me a word about the retreat or how you are. It is too good of me after that

* *Très femmelette.*

to tell you that the King is perfectly well, though he has a little gout ; and that, having been kept in bed for two days, he [thence] gives orders for the siege of Namur [here], for his other army against the Prince of Orange, for Marshal de Lorges to invade Germany, for M. de Catinat to drive back M. de Savoy [the Duke of Savoy was then at war with the King], for M. de Noailles to prevent the Spaniards from acting, for M. de Tourville to defeat the enemy's fleet if he has a favourable wind ; and, besides all this, that he is governing the whole kingdom at home. I take leave of you, after this picture, which ought to fill your mind.

CHAPTER XI.

1692—1694.

FROM this lively interlude Madame de Maintenon returned with even greater eagerness to her labours at St. Cyr, which, under Mother Priolo's rule, became indeed a changed house. Far away in the dim past now seemed the feverish excitements of "Esther" and "Athalie," of the King's courteous exhortations in the community-room, the honeyed compliments of Court ladies, and the profound bows of silken prelates and abbés. The novices' time was spent in retreat and meditation, manual works in silence, practices of humility, spiritual conferences, and in that absolute obedience in the slightest details which is carried out so perfectly and so gaily under the "Visitation" rule.

The King, of course, could never be banished. Upon his return to Versailles, he went to visit Mother Priolo and her assistants, and, courteously saluting the novice-mistress, said to Madame de Maintenon, with his royal faculty of never mistaking a face or a name, "Is not that Mother Marie Constance?" The nun observed that she had been greatly edified by the good example she had seen in that house. To this the King pleasantly answered, "I do not require so much as that. All I ask is that they should follow yours, and profit as much as possible by your

instruction, for they will not always have it." He looked keenly at the other Visitation nun, Mother Lamoinne, who was probably wishing herself back at Chaillot, and said interrogatively to Madame de Maintenon, "That is the one, is it not, whose fervour and modesty charm you so much?"

The King then asked for his old friend, Madame de Loubert, and was told that it was scarcely possible ever to find her, such pains did she take to be completely effaced and hidden in the lowest offices of the house. He was exceedingly pleased on being told this, and said, "This is the way a good nun should act, and give an example of humility on all occasions." On Madame de Maintenon observing that Madame de Loubert was always the first to offer herself for all kinds of rough housework, the King said, "Humility requires of us to do for ourselves whatever we are in the habit of ordering others to do for us." Madame de Maintenon remarked that Madame de Bouju at seventeen was at that moment the superior of her old class-mistress, Madame de Maisonfort, who was now going through her second novitiate. The King was delighted at this, and replied, "Madame la Chanoinesse must now practise the humility that she has preached to others."

On the whole, the King relished his afternoon at St. Cyr very much, and before the visit ended, Madame de Maintenon offered him a small blank sheet of paper and writing materials, begging him to be good enough to write down some remark for the house to profit by. Louis wrote, "*Good postulants. Regularity.*"

Mother Priolo told him that a whole crowd of the girls had been eagerly asking to be admitted as novices, upon which he wisely replied, "It is well to make them ask for

some time, and, above all, take none but good postulants." Madame de Maintenon observed, "You have that much at heart, Sire, as you lose no opportunity of urging it." The King replied, "Yes; that and regularity."

Madame de Maintenon smilingly said that it was very pleasant to be instructed by a preacher in gay embroidery; upon which Louis replied that "Those ladies knew how he ought to be dressed, and would not be disedified at his clothes;" and then he observed, on looking at the timetable, that on account of his visit the Litany of the Holy Name after Compline had been omitted. Madame de Maintenon exclaimed, "You would be an excellent overlooker, Sire, for you not only lean towards exactness in the religious duties, but are also a little severe upon that point." "Yes," replied the King again, "and also as to great regularity."*

It speaks volumes for Madame de Maintenon and the Dames, as well as for the "preacher in fine embroidery," that the nuns from Chaillot spoke of St. Cyr as they did. For there is no possibility of ever doubting the testimony of the Visitation. No earthly consideration would ever lead them to laud pinchbeck as gold. This is what they wrote about the novices whose charge they so unwillingly undertook:—

Their minds were so prepared that we had no difficulty in making them enter into everything that was most regular and fit to establish the religious spirit in their house, such as having all the habits, linen, furniture of the cells, and all that they have, in common; not to have any private marks; to go always with a companion to the parlour; to wear their veils lowered in the

* Languet de Gergy.

presence of men ; and the other practices which are special to ourselves, such as the two daily obediences,* the manner of receiving correction and warnings, penances in the refectory, having two overlookers (admonitresses) for the superior, the being reminded of the presence of God at recreation, the accounts given after the spiritual reading, and the manifestations of conscience to the superior. These practices have been added to their constitutions and rules, and these rules contain the sum of Christian and religious perfection. . . . We can say to their credit that we found them very unlike the portrait given to us of them. We had been, in truth, very much afraid of them, for we expected to find them proud women, puffed up by the favour shown them, priding themselves on their cultivation of mind, accustomed to make studied discourses on the Gospels, and the like. We can bear witness that, though they were not nuns, they were not behindhand in practising the essentials of religion, for it is certain that there is no community; even of regulars, who lived so entirely apart from the world. They went rarely to the parlour, and scarcely ever except to [see] their nearest relations, and for a short time. They scarcely ever spoke to the ladies who visited the house, and avoided them so much that they had the reputation of being savagely shy (*farouches*). They were simple and without pride, and we cannot imagine what can have set about what was said. When the tragedies of “ Esther ” and “ Athalie ” were acted there before the King and his Court, they [the Dames] went up into the tribunes to pray, and it needed the King’s express order to make them come in [to the theatre], when it was observed that their eyes were cast down, and that the greater part of them were praying or telling their beads.†

During the time that this excellent novitiate was in progress, Madame de Maintenon took upon her shoulders

* The Visitation nuns go for orders as to the spending of their time twice daily—in the morning and after dinner.

† Languet de Gergy.

the whole burden of the house and of the two hundred and fifty girls. She put Nanon Balbien in the general mistress's place, and engaged a number of the teaching sisters, who had formerly taken part in the school, to teach the classes for the whole of that year. In 1693, she wrote to Madame de Brinon :—

I go to St. Cyr nearly every day before it is light. The King is in my room when I come back, and I have great need of rest after he is gone. These are the only reasons, madame, why I do not write to you as often as I wish.

At the end of the year's novitiate, the Dames de St. Louis made their profession of vows under the changed rule, which, like that of the Visitation, was grounded on St. Augustine. St. Cyr, in fact, virtually became a Visitation convent, but at the King's wish the graceful and becoming habit was not changed for fourteen years.* The vows were taken in presence of the Bishop of Chartres, whose efforts to obtain a solid foundation of piety at St. Cyr had been unremitting. The bishop also nominated the new superior, as the Dames now, under canonical regulations, could not vote for four years. At the last moment, Madame de Loubert begged not to be obliged to take solemn vows, but to remain as she then was, the last and lowest in the house. The bishop, therefore, appointed Madame de Fontaines,† who was much esteemed by the community. When the King heard that the election was over, he sent word that he was coming to visit the house, where the following account of it was preserved :—

* The Visitation habit was adopted in 1707.

† Anne Françoise Gautier de Fontaines, a woman of great spiritual knowledge and extraordinary beauty.

Mother Priolo, no longer superior, still remained some months [at St. Cyr] to advise our Mother de Fontaines; and before her returning to Chaillot, the King did her the honour of coming on purpose to express his satisfaction at what she had done. Madame de Maintenon brought his Majesty into the community-room, where we were all assembled, and he was so good as to tell us to sit down as usual. After thanking Mother Priolo and the other Mothers in the handsomest and most agreeable way for all the good they had done, he said, "I advise you to be very firm in seeing that all that has been settled should be observed, and to accompany that firmness with great gentleness. I hope the Dames will always bear witness by their submission and obedience that they have consecrated themselves to God with a good heart and full liberty, and that they will not be content with the profession only, but that they will be very perfect religious from their hearts, for it is necessary that every one should strive to attain perfection in his state [of life], and, above all, those who, like you, mesdames, make your state a special study." Speaking then of his original plan that there should be only thirty-six members of the community, the King said, "I can well see and understand that this number is not enough for all the offices, and it is much better that you should serve yourselves than that you should have a greater number of lay-sisters to serve you; for not only are things better done in that way, but also it is more suitable for people consecrated to God to add the practice of humility to all those usually observed in religious houses." He again impressed upon them the careful choice of postulants, saying, "One bad member is enough to spoil all the good established here; perhaps even to destroy it entirely. Never give in to any weakness or to the wishes of others on this point. I dread everywhere an evil-disposed mind, but above all in this house, where it would cost trouble."

Madame de Beauvais could not refrain from complimenting the King upon his extraordinary knowledge of the religious spirit and duties; upon which he replied pleasantly, "Whenever you

like, I will have a conversation with you upon that subject. You will not need to prepare for it, but I am not ready to bear my part in public." The King then begged Mother Priolo not to forsake St. Cyr altogether, but to help the Dames by her good counsel from Chaillot ; and, finally, Madame de Maintenon took up the discourse, and spoke at some length in very handsome terms of the nuns from Chaillot and the way the Dames had profited by their influence.*

And in this way, with many courteous phrases and repeated thanks and praise, the King took his leave, and the whole train went their way.

Madame de Maintenon entered most heartily into the study of the new constitutions, admirably arranged by the Bishop of Chartres, and it was found that she became as capable of instructing the Dames in their interior life and progress, as in their regularity, union, and simplicity of conduct. The young professed nuns consulted her and wrote to her whenever they wished, and never failed to find in her clear, luminous suggestions as great an aid to their spiritual difficulties and puzzles as to their teaching and training of the girls. A part of one of her letters to Madame de Pérou is very characteristic of her way of giving help. It was from Compiègne. She was accompanying the King and the princesses once more to the army in Flanders, and they stayed two days at Compiègne for Corpus Christi, which that year fell in May.

Compiègne, May 21, 1693.

I spent part of the feast day with the Carmelites, with whom I am much edified. They are poor, and delight in being poor ; their house and garden are small, but they have no wish to enlarge them. They only ask for the means of most frugal living, and think that the dowries as now arranged are magnificent,

* Languet de Gergy.

whereas most of the convents are grumbling at them. These good women have only a little room for their chapel, and another like it for their choir. Everything breathes cleanliness and poverty, and I assure you that I have never seen anything that so excites one's devotion. I thought so much of you [all], to whom my thoughts return in all I see, and I conjure you to love poverty. You are bound to it by vow, and ought to practise it in all things. God has allowed the most magnificent King that ever was to build you a very plain house, which has no beauty but its size, which was necessary to contain so many people. I beseech you never to allow it to be decorated under any kind of pretext. Let your sacristy be suitably furnished, but without riches; and when you are making your vestments, let them also be plain. It is not by splendour that God is honoured, but by that sound piety which will, I hope, be found in your community. The Lazarists celebrate the services with a grave majesty which ought to kindle fervour, and the ceremonies are beautiful. Be satisfied with that, and never let a false zeal crowd your chapel and altars with decoration. Under that pretext all hands are opened to beg and receive, which is forbidden to you, and God has allowed such precautions to be taken as point out His will. Be poor in all things, my dear daughters, live frugally, and set that example to the girls you bring up. Save for them, and, whether your revenues dwindle or increase, live like women who have made a vow of poverty, and are determined to restrict themselves to necessities that their charities may be increased. I beseech you to give edification by your simplicity in all things; try to suffer something for poverty's sake, either in food or in clothing, or by depriving yourselves of comforts, either for yourselves or those under your charge, and profit by the excellent teaching that you had on this subject from a sermon by M. l'Abbé de Fénelon. I own that I have a very great desire for your sound piety, and that you do not make it consist in a multitude of prayers in the choir, but in the continual prayer of doing all your actions in God's presence.

I should like you to do a great deal of needlework. It is a

useful austerity, a saving, and a cause of regularity. I think that manual labour is a kind of penance ; that it tends to give lowliness of mind, and therefore humility, and is a help to recollection, supposing it to be carried on in silence, according to your rules. There is nothing in needlework to lift up the mind, or to flatter self-love, especially in work of a simple, common, and coarse character, as ours would be ; for you will never, I think, do costly, useless things, but restrict yourselves to what is wanted for the house. I imagine that for the future the young ladies will learn in the first classes all that they ought to know, and that in the last they could be trained to needlework. This would be no slight advantage to them for the rest of their lives.

The good women here [the Carmelites], with whom I am so delighted, make all that they need. They spin the linen and material for their habits, make their own bread, grow their own vegetables, etc., and scarcely ever have a workman brought in. I do not say this for you, whose institution is different, and obliges you to occupy yourselves with the young ladies ; but it is certain that, if you work with them, you will save a great deal, and prevent the coming in of many working men and women. Our Lord worked long at a trade ; the Blessed Virgin was always at work ; St. Paul laboured with his hands. How can people correspond with such examples, who despise all labour but the intellectual, which is often as dangerous as that other is harmless ? . . .

A point that had much troubled Madame de Maintenon in regard to St. Cyr was the proper choice of chaplains and confessors. Hitherto they had been chosen from the secular clergy, who were, in many instances at that time, neither of the stamp nor the competence that was necessary. After much consultation with the King and Abbé Gobelin, choice had been made of the newly established " Priests of the Missions," commonly called the Lazarist Fathers, whom the King had appointed to serve his own chapel at Versailles. He much approved of their also serving St. Cyr ; and the

Lazarists accordingly opened a little seminary there, which was largely helped by Madame de Maintenon. This school was afterwards transplanted to Chartres by the bishop, and affiliated to his own seminary for the whole diocese.

In 1692, a brief had been sent to Madame de Maintenon by Pope Alexander VIII., addressed ‘To our very dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the noble woman, lady of Maintenon.’ It opened in these terms: “Dear daughter in Jesus Christ, noble lady, your highest virtues and commendable prerogatives are so well known to us, that they lead us to give you some very special marks of our fatherly affection,” etc. This brief, a most extraordinary and signal proof of regard from the Holy See, was accompanied by a letter from Cardinal Ottoboni, who was charged with sending it, with the words, “I kiss your Excellency’s hands.” Madame de Maintenon, as usual, carefully concealed the honour she had received; and it was only after reiterated officious inquiry, and copies of the brief being obtained from the Dateria at Rome, that it became known. Two years afterwards, Alexander VIII. again wrote to Madame de Maintenon, begging her to interest herself in some important business with the King. Later on, two other briefs from Innocent XII. and Clement XI. show in what way her extraordinary position and influence were recognized by the Holy See.

The singular love of self-effacement practised by Madame de Maintenon was largely communicated to Madame de Loubert, and it has cost us a great historical loss; for she burnt all the notes she received from Louis XIV., fearing that the honour of being often written to by the King might tend to vanity and self-esteem.

CHAPTER XII.

1694—1695.

IN 1694, the first note was struck of a great trouble both to the King and Madame de Maintenon ; although, like most of the difficulties and trials that assail religious foundations, it showed how much good was being done at St. Cyr. Worldliness and vain-glory having been bravely overcome and rooted out, the community was now threatened by the more insidious evil of spurious piety.

A young lady, named De la Mothe, of Montargis, had married at eighteen a certain wealthy man, named Guyon, who left her a widow at twenty-eight, endowed with all his fortune. Being young, very gifted, and full of energy in the service of the poor, Madame Guyon devoted herself entirely to piety and good works ; but, unfortunately, she had put herself under the complete direction of a certain Père Lacombe, a Barnabite monk, whose preaching attracted crowds, but who was deeply infected with the special errors of Molinos, afterwards known as Quietism. Père Lacombe had gone to Paris in 1689, carrying Madame Guyon with him, and hoping by her means to influence some of the eminent women of that time. He was successful in obtaining for her the notice of the three Duchesses of de Beauvilliers, de Chevreuse, and de Mortemart, who

were not only of the highest station, but were leaders in all the piety and charities of the day ; and by their introduction Madame Guyon was caressed and made much of by a large circle of good women in Paris. Instructed by Père Lacombe, she began to write pamphlets and leaflets upon pious subjects, which she distributed everywhere, and then obtained the secret printing of a small book called "*Le Moyen court et facile de faire l'Oraison*," which soon attracted serious attention.

Madame Guyon was related to the Chanoinesse de Maisonfort, and often visited her daughter (the *Elise* of "*Esther*") at St. Cyr, where she at length became acquainted with Madame de Maintenon. Whispers as to the tenour of "*Le Moyen court*" having gone abroad, Madame de Maintenon wrote confidentially to the Bishop of Chalons :—

St. Cyr, June 22, 1694.

If you had any pretext for coming here, sir, it would give me exceeding pleasure to see you. It would be of consequence to the good of the Church if I could have the honour of receiving you. If you should think it best not to take this journey, I beg of you to write me your opinion upon Madame Guyon's books, one called "*Le Moyen court et facile de faire l'Oraison*," and the other, "*L'Exposition du Cantique des Cantiques*." I ask you, sir, to give me your opinion upon them, so that I can show it if it should be necessary. Do not give any address ; keep my secret.

Believe, sir, that there is no one in the world who more esteems and respects you than your very humble and very obedient servant.

The Archbishop of Paris, de Harlay, though unfortunately a man of relaxed morals, was thoroughly instructed in his ecclesiastical duties, and when complicated scandals

arose on account of Père Lacombe and Madame Guyon, he ordered the Barnabite monk to be detained in the monastery of his order in Paris, where he was strictly examined as to his doctrines. As this examination and the monk's obstinacy proved very unsatisfactory, Père Lacombe was sent first to the Bastille, and then to Vincennes, where he died in 1698. The King ordered Madame Guyon also to be confined in the Visitation convent in the Rue St. Antoine, where she contrived to represent herself as a very simple, ignorant woman, seeking instruction and solely delighting in prayer. The matter came to be looked upon, therefore, by many people, as a persecution by the not very saintly Archbishop of a saintly woman; and this opinion was so urged upon Madame de Maintenon privately by one of the Lazarists, that she besought the King to set Madame Guyon at liberty.

Madame Guyon was, of course, overflowing in expressions of gratitude and lowly respect to her benefactress, and instead of chance visits now and then to the parlour at St. Cyr, Madame Guyon became a frequent guest in the house. She was allowed the liberty of talking to the Dames in private, of distributing her books among the community, especially "*Le Moyen court*," and "*L'Exposition du Cantique des Cantiques*," so that in a few years the unconscious Dames de St. Louis were steeped in the insidious Quietist flood, and had imbibed all the latent errors in regard to free-will which it involved. In 1694, in order to suppress the agitation about her books, Madame Guyon offered to retire to a convent in the diocese of Meaux, and put herself under Bossuet's direction. Madame de Maintenon then wrote again to the Bishop of Chalons:—

The last day of the year 1694.

M. de Meaux grants everything, and we are going to send Madame Guyon to him. The King will tell the Archbishop [Harlay] this, and will speak to him with the idea that this business need not be spoken of again. I hope after that this prelate's zeal will cool down. I have just written to M. de Meaux, which I have not done during these few days, as I have been troubled a good deal with a cold. I have pressed him to finish the affair, and to make known to his friends what he thinks of this woman's opinions. I have represented to him that after that he will have plenty of time to examine all the writings he has [of hers], and to answer them as he thinks fit. . . .

It had been already proposed to raise Fénelon—who had too easily accepted some of Madame Guyon's writings—to the archbishopric of Cambrai, and thus to stifle the increasing agitation, but neither the King nor Madame de Maintenon were the least aware of the many issues of Quietism, nor how deeply it had taken root in France.

The Bishop of Chartres was, as usual, one of the first to be fully alive and keen to the mischief, and early in 1695 a conference was summoned at Issy, joined by Bossuet, which lasted from eight to ten months, in which Madame Guyon's writings were carefully discussed. Fénelon attended from time to time, to explain and justify certain of the expressions or opinions, and during these months he was raised to the see of Cambrai, and wrote his celebrated "*Maximes des Saints*." The examiners at Issy drew up thirty-four articles condemning Madame Guyon out of her own books, and hoped that Fénelon would assent; but he still maintained that the articles were strained beyond the meaning of her words. The Bishop of Chalons published a mandate including the thirty-four articles under censure,

and the Bishop of Chartres still more solemnly and particularly condemned the opinions, as tending to discourage and discontinue prayer, good works, the avoidance of temptation, and the practice of Christian virtues. For, as he said, under the pretext of "quiet of the soul"—in other words, absolute spiritual idleness and indifference—fatalism must be the inevitable result.

Madame Guyon subscribed, even by oath, to the condemnation of her own books, and swore also to write nothing more, and it was thought that she had fully and truly renounced her error. But the truth was not in her, and she was only trying to escape from restraint. She persuaded Bossuet to let her leave Meaux, under pretence of taking some baths for her health ; but instead of going to those waters, she returned to Paris, and hid herself in a little house in the Faubourg St. Antoine. After long search, the King's officer, Désgrez,* found her out by observing that no one knocked at the door of the house, and yet that various people let themselves in with a key. He forced an entrance, and found Madame Guyon sitting in one of the rooms, with two girls and a certain Abbé Couturier, who was shortly afterwards unfrocked for his irregular life. Madame Guyon was taken by the King's orders to the Bastille.

Fénelon, however, still refused to yield, and the Bishop of Chartres made another visitation of St. Cyr, when he took away with him every religious book and manuscript in the house, even Fénelon's letters to Madame de Maisonfort, who so deeply resented their capture, that Madame de Maintenon was obliged to intervene and write to her from

* *Officier du guet.*

Marly that obedience was now her one single safeguard. Fénelon himself had told her that certain of his writings were "not for everybody," which had not seemed satisfactory to Madame de Maintenon.

Bossuet accordingly, at her wish, opened a series of conferences on spiritual subjects at St. Cyr, after which any of the Dames were at liberty to see him in private, to make objections to what he had preached, or to ask questions. Madame de Maisonfort took full advantage of this opportunity, and, finding herself shaken, she wrote to Fénelon to say so, and to ask if she should see Bossuet again. Fénelon signified his disapproval, and told her that he had long ago answered the difficulties she spoke of himself. Bossuet continued his instructions upon the new notions on "passive prayer," and Madame de Maisonfort made up her mind never to see Fénelon again.

All this time the chief movers in the agitation had made the fatal mistake of keeping the King in ignorance of the lengths to which it had gone, and how deeply Fénelon was involved. Even Madame de Maintenon, contrary to her usual clear-sighted and straightforward way of dealing, had been persuaded by the bishops to keep silence, on the ground that his Majesty was much tried and occupied with the fresh complications in Spanish affairs. When Fénelon's "*Maximes des Saints*" came out, and when M. de Beauville gave a copy of it to the King, the comptroller-general, M. de Pontchartrain, communicated to him certain facts, which at once opened his eyes.

Bossuet was immediately sent for, when the King obliged him to relate the whole course of the Quietist difficulties, and was exceedingly angry with him for concealing that

his own grandchildren's tutor was tainted with religious error. He was almost equally wrathful with Madame de Maintenon, and it was for a while doubtful whether she would not be banished from Court, for having dared to conceal from him what was of such vital importance. Most truly had it been said of Louis XIV. that "he held religion in regard above all other things." He prized obedience to the Church, he hated sectarian teaching and everything the least akin to it, dreading the very shadow of religious error. He had made great sacrifices (mistakenly, but firmly believing it his duty) to banish the Huguenots from his kingdom, had on all occasions pursued and striven to root out Jansenism, and had been led to believe that the danger from Quietist errors was extinguished by Madame Guyon's retractation and the imprisonment of Père Lacombe. Yet now this false teaching had penetrated his own palaces, was sitting side by side with the princes, his children's children; and this in the person of a prelate whom he had loved to honour, and who, by the distinction of his great talents and reputation, was able to form a powerful party and to kindle a most destructive fire in his kingdom. The King, however, was always able to control his anger, and all that he did was to order Fénelon to leave his diocese, and to deprive two abbés and several gentlemen about the young princes of their posts, as being Fénelon's intimate friends.

It is a relief to turn from these religious troubles, and go back a little to a certain visit the King made to St. Cyr between 1695 and 1696, first attending Vespers, which he praised very much for the dignity and exactness of the ceremonial. Madame de Maintenon said that it was a

great advantage to the community to have them sung every day. A long conversation in the community-room followed, during which Madame de Maintenon observed that the rules were now being finally put into shape, and that each person consulted had a different voice upon them. The King, with his marvellous sagacity, replied :—

“I have exhorted them all to make as few objections as possible, but simply to state their opinion, and to hold inviolably to what has been decided and settled, even when it is contrary to their own counsel. For one man should never presume to think his own opinion better than that of the greater number, and he should have uprightness and integrity enough to sustain and value what has been lawfully established even against his own views.” Madame de Maintenon remarked that some of the Dames were very young for the offices they filled, and she handed the King a list of these offices, with the names of those who held them. He observed, “There is not an office in the house that is not important, and the Dames must discharge them faithfully and not superficially ; it is desirable that they should all be experienced, but as it is difficult to combine that experience with the strength and vigour of youth, the young Dames here must listen to the elder, and follow their advice.” Madame de Maintenon went on to say that one of their difficulties was the assembling of all the Dames together for chapter or conferences, because the girls could never be left alone. Then, as the King began to say, “In such a difficulty——,” Madame de Maintenon broke in quickly with, “And what might not happen while they were left alone?” But the King tranquilly went on, “I am well aware that everything must be dropped sooner than leave them [the children] a moment by themselves. But I think that in that case the nuns left with them could give their votes in writing, or that the secretaries of the chapter could go to them with the voting-boxes, which the superior could first lock, and of which she would keep the key.” *

* Languet de Gergy.

And it was exactly in this way that the collecting of the voices of the whole community was thereafter carried out, until, at the great Revolution, St. Cyr became a desecrated and dismantled ruin. Madame de Maintenon showed very characteristic resolution in striving to root out the last remains of religious error from St. Cyr. She was personally much attracted to Madame Guyon, and always carried in her pocket a copy of "*Le Moyen court* ;" but when the Bishop of Chartres carried off the books, she gave up her own copy, and promised that not a single one should remain at St. Cyr, and from that moment she also rooted out her friendship for the author. She was accused by St. Simon of continually taking up and putting down her friendships, and changing from hot to cold ; but, in truth, she was guided more by principle and reason than feeling, and if once a thing was seen by her to be a duty, whether it was easy or hard, pleasant or repugnant, the duty was fulfilled.

She now anxiously sought to be more fully instructed upon the forbidden opinions, that she might more clearly expose the danger to the Dames de St. Louis. She consulted M. Joly, the superior of the Lazarists, the Bishop of Chalons, the superior of St. Sulpice, and Père Bourdaloue, the Jesuit. Each of these spiritual guides severally gave her the same reasons and opinions, which she carefully examined, and then imparted fully to the Dames. The chief stumbling-block with them, as with many others, was Fénelon's obstinate refusal to submit to the decisions of Issy.

Finally, the matter was carried to Rome, when, after due deliberation, twenty-three propositions from Fénelon's

"Maximes des Saints" were set out, and condemned as "rash, scandalous, ill-sounding, offensive to pious ears, pernicious in practice, and even erroneous." As soon as this outspoken decision by the supreme authority was made known, the true character of Fénelon shone out, as the scales fell from his own eyes. Rome had spoken, and the matter was finished. He announced the decree himself from the pulpit of his own cathedral, withdrew the condemned passage of his book, and declared his perfect obedience and submission. As an earnest of this submission, and as a perpetual memorial and example, he gave a rich monstrance to his cathedral for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, representing an angel holding the sun, which contained the crystal for the Host, and trampling under foot various books, on one of which was clearly engraved, "Maximes des Saints." This monstrance was seen in the cathedral treasury at Cambrai by Languet de Gergy many years afterwards.

Louis XIV., now fully awakened to the mischief that had been done at St. Cyr, and resolved that nothing regarding that house for the future should be hidden from him, on any pretext whatever, strictly questioned Madame de Maintenon and the superior of the house. He then, for the first time, learnt how attached the Chanoinesse (de Maisonfort) had been to Fénelon's guidance, and how unwilling she was to yield to any counter-influence, and he determined to pluck up this possible source of continued evil by the roots. Madame de Maisonfort, with her intimate friends, Madame du Tour and Madame de Montaigle, received *lettres de cachet*, and were sent away to separate convents at a considerable distance,

and the Bishop of Chartres agreed that this was not too strong a measure to secure the well-being of the house. The King, at the same time, wrote to St. Cyr this letter:—

The special interest that I take in your house, and knowing how prejudicial it would be to it if the Dames du Tour, de Maisonfort, and de Montaigle—who have left it by my commands and in obedience to the Lord Bishop of Chartres, for reasons known to me and communicated to him—should some day re-enter [the house], obliges me to make it hereby known that my intention in sending them away is that there should be no hope of return, and to shelter you from any designs they may make upon you for the future. After having well thought it over, I forbid you, by all my authority as king and as founder, ever to permit these three Dames to return among you under any pretext whatever. I have no doubt that all those who might wish to receive them again hereafter will be restrained from so doing by such an express declaration of my will.

Done at Compiègne, September 5, 1698.

(Signed)

LOUIS.

The King did more than merely signify his will, and in his way of doing it showed the same intrinsic greatness and magnificent loyalty to his faith. After giving due notice, he went to St. Cyr with the young Duchess of Burgundy,* and found the whole community assembled, with Madame de Maintenon.

The King took the chair prepared for him, and, making everybody sit down, spoke to them with much feeling and eloquence of his grief in being obliged to banish from the house Dames whom he knew were beloved, and for whom he himself had a strong regard. But he had a greater regard still for the purity of doctrine and for the true teaching of the Church, and when anything like

* Marie Adelaide of Savoy.

religious error, or opinions even of doubtful tendency, found their way into a great educational house, every private consideration must be sacrificed to root out the evil. In that house, girls from all parts of his kingdom were gathered, and if they imbibed unsound teaching the whole kingdom might be infected. He had made great efforts and done his best to root out false doctrine throughout France, and this house of St. Cyr was so especially dear to him that he was obliged to guard it by the strongest measures, lest at his death another spirit, false and unsound, might be brought in and prevail.

When the King adverted to his death, which, though he was not more than sixty years old, he seemed to forecast as near at hand, the young Duchess of Burgundy burst into tears, and the Dames were also deeply moved. These tears, so sudden and unexpected, seemed to put a solemn seal upon a day never forgotten at St. Cyr, when the King thus took his place like a father among them, and spoke with the doctrinal eloquence of a preacher as well as the majesty of a true King.

The remedy had been sharp, and no one bowed to it more submissively, or felt it more keenly, than Madame de Maintenon, who, long afterwards, wrote to one of the Dames, "You will never weep for your sisters as much as I have done for four or five years." It was the last time that St. Cyr was ever troubled with novelties of religious teaching, and Madame de Maintenon at the same time cleared away many obstacles from her own spiritual course. She was a woman upon whom none of the real lessons of life were ever lost, and these trials and failures only stirred up her courage and singleness of resolve to mount ever upwards to better things. She had been most warmly attached to Madame de Maisonfort, who had been her

stand-by in many difficult circumstances, but she was never led astray by her attachments when principle demanded their sacrifice. On this point she showed a courage and determination rarely to be found.

She had always been careful to ground herself in sacred history and the letter of the Scriptures, but henceforward she used the New Testament continually, and urged the Dames to do the same. She chose out the simplest and most practical spiritual books for daily use, much preferring the writings of St. Francis de Sales. She wrote to the Dames :—

I beg of you, my dear daughters, to be very simple in your choice of books. Attach yourselves to what you find in the books and not to the language. Read for profit, and have nothing else in view, for to have that is a vain and dangerous thing, and we are too happy in being obliged by our sex and our ignorance to be humble and submissive, which is the easiest as well as the safest way.

As to reading the New Testament, she gave the Dames this excellent advice : “ Read with a simple mind. If there is anything you do not understand, reverence it, and be satisfied with practising what you do understand.”

Madame de Maintenon had seen a good deal of the Jansenists, and had imbibed a sincere dread of their subtle, refining evasions, and the address with which they eluded obedience to the Church while professing a reverential submission. She kept a strict watch now on all who came and went at St. Cyr, and herself dismissed a lady of great gifts and piety, with considerable wealth, who offered herself as a postulant, but who had shown signs of Jansenist tendencies. She particularly disliked, in society, the conversation of women who professed to keep entirely aloof

from the subject, and only to watch the course of Jansenism as having no part in the question. A lady having objected to her one day that she wished to be neutral on this point, Madame de Maintenon exclaimed quickly, "What ! would you be neutral between the Church and what the Church condemns ? It is true we must not meddle with discussions, but we must enter into every subject when there is a question of obedience and of giving an example." Once, when Bossuet had been telling Madame de Maintenon how far the Jansenists were making head in France, and that they had of late been speaking disparagingly of holy pictures and rosaries, and even of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, she spoke of it during recreation at St. Cyr, and added, "Since I heard that, I feel that I should like to be surrounded by sacred pictures, to cover the walls of my room with them ; and I shall always carry a rosary about with me, that, in case of dying suddenly, I should be known as a true daughter of the Church."

One of the class-mistresses at St. Cyr asked her to come to her class, and give a few words of instruction to the girls upon Jansenism ; to which Madame de Maintenon, in her wise way, replied :—

I can easily tell them all I know on the subject, for it is very little ; and we are too happy in being women and not obliged to know in order to decide. It is enough that we submit and obey. But this I do know, that the Jansenist opinions upon predestination and the death of Jesus Christ are practically very dangerous ; for as they say that Jesus Christ died only for a very small number of elect, while the rest of the faithful are deprived of the means of meriting heaven, it would be such a discouragement as would prevent numbers of men from attempting to secure their salvation.

This spirit of utter abnegation of the right to decide and teach characterized Madame de Maintenon more and more as life went on. The Bishop of Chartres almost delegated to her his own authority at St. Cyr, making over to her in writing the government of the house, spiritually as well as temporally. But she continued to consult him upon every point that arose, "at all times and for all things," saying that "this was the sure means of drawing down upon the house and upon herself the blessing of God." After the death of Abbé Gobelin he became her director, and she made a list every day of the faults she had committed, and laid the whole account before him every month. More than one of these summaries of her examinations of conscience are given by Bonhomme.*

In regard to giving up her own will she was indeed well trained, for as she once said to the Dames, "Have I not also my 'obediences' and rules that I must follow, not according to my own will, but the will of others? I am neither mistress of my time nor of my actions. At ten o'clock at night I do not know what I shall do on the morrow, and [only] when the King leaves my room do I receive my 'obedience' from him." When she was at St. Cyr she went to the choir, to the refectory, and the recreation as punctually as the Dames, and if she was late at any of the community duties, she never failed to report herself to the superior; so that she was, as they all said, a spur and an example to the whole house.

* "Madame de Maintenon et sa Famille."

CHAPTER XIII.

1695—1696.

IT is necessary to look back a little, to bring up the course of general events. In 1695, the Archbishop of Paris, Harlay de Champvallon,* died suddenly, and Madame de Maintenon used all her influence to obtain the see for the Bishop (de Noailles) of Châlons. In doing this she had acted entirely from her earnest desire to give a holy and exemplary archbishop to the diocese and a trustworthy adviser to the King. He was a man of singular piety and the most austere morals, but, unfortunately, also of a peculiar cast of mind and great obstinacy, which afterwards brought him into serious difficulties. It would have been far better if Madame de Maintenon had not exerted her powerful influence in this matter, as she many times acknowledged in after-years. He was raised to the greater see, and received the crosier as Archbishop of Paris.

That same year Madame de Maintenon wrote to Madame des Fontaines from Fontainebleau:—

September 21, 1695.

. . . I was not very sorry not to bid good-bye to our Sisters; I could not do it without pain. I beg of you to bless them. Let each one of them advance in that perfection I know they seek,

* So spelt by Languet de Gergy, by Geffroy "Chanvalon."

that altogether they may make up a community living like the angels; that they may be humble, silent, and zealous for the spiritual good of their institute; that they may be willing to mortify themselves, and that their superior may take thought how to keep them innocently happy; that they may become simple; that the recreation may be bright and general; that they may avoid particular friendships, which are the source of all kinds of trouble; that they may love their superiors, who tenderly love them. But after having desired so many gifts for them, I beseech of them to ask God to give me what they think I most need, of which they can judge far better than I. It is not enough to exhort our daughters—we must give them examples of perfection. Here is one which I have found, by an author who is neither to be suspected nor disliked by them [Fénelon].

“You have charge, madame, of a large community of daughters, and it interests you to watch examples of perfection. Here is one of regular discipline, which I lay before you. Every nun in the abbey for nobles in this neighbourhood [Cambrai] is endowed under the custom of spending one month every year with her family, and going to visit all her relations. It is a regularly instituted courtesy. When I go to any convent, the superior comes out into the street to receive me, and all strangers are received in the parlour without any grating or enclosure. When I go in, I am taken to the church, the choir, the cloisters, the dormitory, and, lastly, to the refectory, with all my suite. Then the superior offers me a glass, and we drink together, she and I, to one another’s health. The community then also pledge me, and my grand-vicar and clergy come to my rescue. All this passes with a simplicity that would delight you. In spite of this rude simplicity, our good Sisters live in the most charming innocence. They scarcely ever receive any visitors but their nearest relatives; the parlours are empty, the outer world profoundly ignored, and there reigns throughout a most edifying rusticity. There is no more refinement here in piety than in other things; virtue is as rough as the exterior, but the foundations are good. In the Flemish middle

class there is less good and less evil than in France ; neither vice nor virtue are carried to such lengths, but the generality of people, and especially of nuns, are more candid and innocent."

You see, my dear mother, what emulation I feel for you after reading this, and how thoroughly glad I should be to see you drinking with Monseigneur the Bishop of Chartres, and Sister de Veilhan pledging his grand-vicar. You will think leisure abounds, as I have undertaken to copy such a long letter ; but you know it is a feast, and the King is entertaining Marshal de Boufflers, who is inconsolable at having lost Namur. Good-bye, my dear daughter.

Madame de Maintenon found it a considerable consolation for some time to be able to write fully to the new Archbishop of Paris, and she made free use of her opportunity. Her letters to him abundantly show how powerful her influence was in religious affairs, and how wearisome and at times unhopeful was her life with the King. She was often at issue with the King's confessor, Père de la Chaise, who possibly thought that she had too much to say about public and ecclesiastical affairs. In a letter to the Archbishop, she says :—

St. Cyr, December 27, 1695.

Shall you not try, monseigneur, to cure Père de la Chaise, or at least to make him ashamed of his maxim that pious people (*les dévots*) are good for nothing ? It is very true that there are pious people who are not fit to rule, but that is from the stamp of their minds, not on account of their piety. The good Father's maxim is public, therefore you can speak of it freely to him. Shall you not touch his honour by saying that he ought to be the protector of piety, instead of making it seem as if we did not agree, since I love pious people, and he cannot endure them ? I think there is nothing in that that he can carry to the King that would not tell against himself. . . .

It is a misrepresentation of what passed between the King and

me, the evening before he went to his duties,* to say that it was "conversation," for I never could get him to speak. I related something out of St. Augustine, to which he listened with pleasure. Upon that I took the opportunity of saying that I did not understand why he would never have some reading that would instruct and even entertain him, and that I thought Père de la Chaise was against it. He said he had not said anything against it, but, on the contrary, he had proposed it to him. I replied that it was difficult to believe this when I recollected his having pressed me to read to him things written by M. de Fénelon, to read some of St. Francis de Sales, of his praying with me and being so touched that he had wished to make, and indeed had made, a general confession. That all this had fallen through in four and twenty hours, and that he had never spoken a word to me since about devotion. All his answer was that he was not a man who followed things up,† meaning to say that he followed out nothing. I do not believe he is untruthful, therefore it is not Père de la Chaise who comes between us in regard to piety.

But, monseigneur, if Père de la Chaise is cleared, what conclusion must we come to? What a misfortune it is if the King is afraid that I should speak to him! He has a scruple at wishing to please you by giving a holy bishop to Châlons [another of the de Noailles family], and at the same time he gives one without piety to Langres, if I may believe the *curé* who has just spoken to me.

I am very glad that you find the letter I have trusted you with too harsh. It has always appeared so to me. Do you not recognize the style? . . . I think I see by a letter I have received from the Bishop of Chartres that, provided I contribute towards making good bishops, he will let me off for everything else.

The "harsh letter" alluded to is supposed to be the celebrated one either written by Fénelon and suppressed, or ascribed to him, containing bitter truths very unpleasantly conveyed to Louis XIV. :—

* Confession and communion.

† "*Je ne suis pas homme de suite.*"

You have spent your life, Sire, astray from the paths of truth and justice. . . . Your people are dying of hunger. The tillage of the earth is almost abandoned; the towns and villages are depopulated; all trades languish and do not give food to the workmen. Commerce is destroyed. . . . You do not love God, you fear Him only with a slavish fear. Your religion consists only of superstition and some superficial practices. You centre everything in yourself. . . . Madame de Maintenon and the Duc de Beauvillier at least could make use of your trust in them to undeceive you, but their weakness and cowardice dishonour them. What are they good for, if they do not prove to you that you ought to give back the countries that do not belong to you? *

There is a letter of the following year from Madame de Maintenon to the Archbishop, which gives a curious insight as to the state of social affairs, and the effect that the King's changed life had upon the Court:—

March 8, 1696.

. . . Monsieur [the Dauphin] is the one who seems most troubled by the piety. He told the King the other day that there had been plenty of balls and masquerades, and that he had been forbidden to gamble at the fair; † that the duke had asked for dice, and they had been refused him, and then he asked for a *totam* [teetotum]; that they did not like any one to eat and drink [at the fair]; that the picklocks and water-carriers could not show themselves now on Sundays; and in all these complaints, which he made without adding any comments, one could see that he thought he was with people who think very much as you

* The later writers on the manuscripts of this reign, as M. Arthur de Boislisle and M. Geffroy, who quotes him, do not believe in the authenticity of this letter. Yet Fénelon was undoubtedly accused and convicted of much imprudent and impulsive writing.

† The fair of St. Germain was held upon the land dependent on the abbey of St. Germain-des-Pres, between that church and St. Sulpice. There were theatres, games of all sorts, and drinking booths. These were frequented as much by the nobles as the people, and a saturnalia reigned, which ecclesiastical censures and police regulations were alike powerless to check.

do, and would hinder him from saying more. The King made scarcely any answer ; but when Monsieur had gone, he told me that you had said nothing to him about gambling, but he was afraid nevertheless that you had forbidden it, and he has told me since that gambling was included in the prohibitions of M. de la Reynie.*

The King is wise ; he respects you, he will not resist you. He told me the other evening that he would not have it on his conscience to oppose what you wished. This is his state of mind. And otherwise he is afraid of novelty in anything, but when he is accustomed to things they will not be novelties.

In the same year, she writes again :—

April 25, 1696.

Père de la Chaise loses no opportunity now of coming to see me. He came to tell me yesterday that the King is going to make Abbé de Caylus his chaplain. We had afterwards a long conversation. I saw that the King is not so docile as I thought, and that the good Father gives him very good advice. He exhorted me to preach to him, assuring me that no one can do it better than I. We offered incense to one another, and we were of the same mind ; but when I began to speak of the love of God, and he tried to persuade me that a very perfect [love] could be found in fear, we separated, after having had some dispute.

She wrote to the Archbishop again during the next month from Marly :—

Marly, May 18, 1696.

What would I not give to assist at the consecration next Sunday, and to witness the delight of Madame de Noailles ! † These, it seems to me, are the feasts and pleasures allowed to Christian people. God has not willed to give me such consola-

* La Reynie was the celebrated head (lieutenant) of the police of that time. Louis XIV. put unbounded confidence in him, and almost raised his office to the rank of a ministerial position.

† The duchess was the mother of the Archbishop, who was to consecrate his brother, the Bishop of Châlons.

tions, but I shall ask Him most heartily to shower His graces upon the consecrator and the consecrated, and to be their strength to bear the toils of the episcopate.

Ask Him for me, monseigneur, the strength to bear the toils of Court pleasures. I have been enduring them now for a week, and there are so many that I am overwhelmed with the dreariness of never hearing a single rational conversation. The chapter of peas still goes on. The intense desire to eat peas, the delight of having eaten peas, and the joyful expectation of eating yet more peas—these have been the three points of discussion for the last four days. There are even ladies who, after having supped, and well supped, with the King, find more peas to eat when they get home before they go to bed. You have some strange sheep, monseigneur. Forgive this outburst of annoyance to my pastor, and, if you like, share it with the Bishop of St. Cyr [Chartres].

The King has erysipelas in the face, which is a trifling matter. He is to be bled on Monday, will rest on Tuesday, be physicked on Wednesday, and go on Thursday to the Trianon. . . .

Madame de Maintenon wrote to the Archbishop with admirable brevity, and in her usual straightforward way, about a confessor for the Duchess of Burgundy :—

Marly, August 5, 1696.

. . . Two days ago, as I was leaving my room, the King said to me, “I am going to see a man whom you think a good man but stupid;” and he mentioned Père de la Chaise. I replied, “You think so even more than I do, for you see him oftener.” The King replied, “It is true; and my opinion lowers * every day.” I thought it a good opportunity, and I said to him, “Do not give me some stupid man as a confessor to the princess [the Duchess of Burgundy], and order Père de la Chaise to consult the Archbishop, who has a great respect for some members of the Society [the Jesuits].† He said, “Find out some good person, and I will

* *Cela baisse.*

† It was the custom to choose a Jesuit Confessor for the princes and princesses.

ask for him." I am therefore able to consult you, monseigneur, the first time I have the honour of seeing you.

Do not come here, for the King regrets every moment spent out of the gardens. He will not go to Trianon again. We shall go on Saturday, please God, to Versailles. We shall be there about a week, and go thence to Meudon. I see with pleasure that the King has resumed his old familiarity with your brother.

There is a pleasant interlude in the same year of a letter to Madame de Radouay, Dame de St. Louis:—

October [or November], 1696.

I beg of you to profit, for yourself and for others, by your experience of *quinquina* [quinine was first known as "Jesuits' bark" in Europe in 1639]. Nothing is more unreasonable than your prejudices, which in our time extend to everything. There is no one now who will not be a doctor, there are scarcely fewer who do not meddle with [spiritual] direction. Everybody decides upon everything; women meddle with criticism on books, sermons, and the government of spiritual and temporal affairs. Modesty is no longer the fashion; no one knows how to answer, "I do not know; it is not for me to judge." No one stops short upon any subject. An unbearable assumption takes the place of knowledge and intelligence, and never was there greater ignorance. Do not admit or permit this quality among you, but say at once that you do not know. Let yourself be guided by confessors, doctors, superiors, magistrates, and the King; and teach this modesty of spirit to your girls, by whom this letter is more needed than by you.

I am delighted that the "red ribbons" wish to please me, and how charming it will be if, at the first visit I can pay them, you are able to tell me that they are all extremely good! They will attain this happiness if they beg it from God, and may they serve Him with their whole hearts!

In 1696, the Duke of Savoy, whose wife was niece to

Louis XIV.,* broke off his alliance with the European powers at war with that king, and concluded a separate peace on his own account. It had been upon that occasion that his eldest daughter, Marie Adelaide, was betrothed to the Duke of Burgundy, and sent to the French Court to finish her education. The princess, then only eleven years old, was to have been ceremoniously received at Fontainebleau, but the King was so impatient to see her that he went on to Montargis with the Court. Thence he wrote to Madame de Maintenon a letter, which was preserved until the miserable revolt of the Commune in 1871, when so much of the priceless library at the Louvre was burnt. Happily a copy of it had been published by the Bibliophilist Society in 1822. It contains one of the usual seventeenth-century *inventories* by way of description of the princess:—

She has the best grace and the finest figure I have ever seen. Dressed like a picture, and her head to match. The eyes bright and very beautiful; black and admirable eyelashes; the skin smooth, red and white, just as one would have it; the most beautiful and abundant black hair that one can see; a very red mouth, full lips; the teeth white, long, and very irregular; well-made hands, but of the colour of her age. . . . I am quite satisfied. . . . I hope you will be so too. . . . A noble style, polished and pleasant manners. I am glad to speak well of her, for I think, without prepossession or flattery, I am obliged to do so.†

At five o'clock in the morning, after receiving two letters from the King, Madame de Maintenon wrote to the Duchess of Savoy:—

November 5, 1696.

I wish I could be allowed to send your Highness the letter I have just received from the King. He could not wait till this

* Daughter of "Monsieur" and Henrietta of England, his first wife.

† Geffroy.

evening to tell me what he thought of the princess, for he is charmed with her, and is sure, from what he sees, that her education has not been neglected. He exclaims about her style, her grace, her good breeding, her self-control, her modesty. . . . Ever since the princess arrived I have never ceased wishing that your Royal Highness could have seen how she was received, and how extremely satisfied the King and Monseigneur [Duke of Burgundy] are with her. It is not possible for any one else to have gone through the interview as she has done. She was perfect throughout, which is a very agreeable surprise in a girl of eleven years old. I do not wish to mingle any admiring words of mine with such as ought to count, but nevertheless I cannot refrain from saying to your Royal Highness that this child is a prodigy, and that, according to all appearance, she will be the glory of her time.

The next day, Madame de Maintenon wrote again to the Duchess of Savoy in the same strain of what looks like affected eulogy, but which was then only looked upon as the utmost refinement of good manners. This letter is very charming in its *naïveté* and delicacy of touch :—

November 6, 1696.

Here is a letter which is in no way suitable to the respect due to your Royal Highness ; but I believe she* will forgive everything in the transports of our joy at the treasure we have received, for the Duchess of Lude, who only speaks of it with tears in her eyes, says that the disposition [of the princess] is as perfect as everything we see externally ; that she has only to speak to show her intelligence, and her manner of listening and all the changes of her face sufficiently show that nothing escapes her. Whatever may be told, your Royal Highness will not credit how far the King's satisfaction goes. He did me the honour yesterday to tell

* In the letters of Madame de Maintenon to people of greater distinction than usual, as to the Queen of Spain and Mary Beatrice of England, the persons are invariably mixed in this way.

me that he was obliged to keep guard over himself lest it should be thought excessive. She thinks Monsieur [the Dauphin] rather fat, but as for Monseigneur [Duke of Burgundy], she thinks him slender, and that the King has the finest figure in the world. She is so polite that she cannot bear to say the least disagreeable thing. Yesterday I demurred to the caresses she was giving me, on the ground that I was too old, and she replied, "Ah, not so very old!" She came to me when the King had gone out of his room, doing me the honour to kiss me. Then, having very soon noticed that I cannot remain standing, she made me sit down; and, putting herself coaxingly almost on my lap, she said, "Mamma charged me to say a thousand kind things to you for her, and to beg you to be a friend to me. Pray teach me everything that I must do to please." These were the words, madame, but the sweetness, the gaiety, the grace which went with the words, cannot be put into a letter.

This letter is signed "Françoise d'Aubigné Maintenon."

Notwithstanding her great and sincere admiration for the future Duchess of Burgundy, Madame de Maintenon was most reluctant to accede to the King's wish that she should superintend her education. Nor can this be wondered at when we see how her time was swallowed up, her strength overburdened, her brain and her feelings overtaxed and strained by the needs of the Dames de St. Louis and St. Cyr, the religious dissensions among those she most revered, the miseries of the people, and, besides all these, and ever-increasingly, the claims of the King, whose exquisite and courteous selfishness never admitted the idea of her being fatigued.

Madame de Maintenon did, in truth, need, in her few spare moments, the repose of the chapel at St. Cyr; but upon consultation with her constant stay, the Bishop of

Chartres, he decided against even this moderate and reasonable indulgence. It must be admitted that his letter is couched in a strain of flattery that sounds a little excessive to our ears :—

Hold yourself, madame, under the yoke of obedience. You owe this to the King ; you owe it to the ministers of Jesus Christ, to whom Providence has submitted you. Be obedient, then, to the first as to your master and chief, and to the second as to your guides and those who hold the place of God to lead you to the way of salvation. Labour in the vineyard which is put in your charge, and offer yourself quite afresh to the toil and fatigue and annoyance of your position. Not only is your own soul your vineyard, but the peace of the kingdom is your vineyard, the princess [of Savoy] is your vineyard, St. Cyr is your vineyard. Go down, then, into your vineyard, and bear the burden and the heat of the day. The Master of the vineyard promises you a great reward. Oh, how great is the place you fill in the kingdom of God ! How easy it is for you to press forward, if you will ! You are a great spectacle to angels and to men.

Madame de Maintenon, as usual, implicitly obeyed the call to fresh duties and toils. She gave up a good deal of time to amusing and interesting the girl-princess, studying her character and inclinations, that she might lead her to fill her future position well, and be of vital service to France. The princess in these early years fully responded to all the efforts of her able instructor, and, having become intimate with Mdlle. d'Aubigné (Duchesse de Noailles), who always addressed Madame de Maintenon as "aunt," she adopted the appellation, and declared herself Madame de Maintenon's niece for life. At this time, being sixty years old, Madame de Maintenon had still the most winning and engaging manner with children and young

people. She took Marie Adelaide to St. Cyr, and she soon went in and out of the house, spending whole days there, and submitting herself in all ways to the routine and discipline of it, as the elder girls did. When not there, the princess spent her evenings from six o'clock till ten in Madame de Maintenon's rooms, often dined with her, and went in and out, interrupting her letters and occupations just as she liked. Some years later, after her marriage, when the wife of fourteen and the husband of sixteen often fell out, Madame de Maintenon became the refuge, the arbiter, and the comforter, both of the girl-wife and boy-husband.

According to the miserable frivolity of the time, whenever intellectual companionship and pursuits were not relished, gambling became the resource, and the young princess very early gave herself up to the excitement. Madame de Maintenon spoke and wrote to her seriously about the ruin and demoralization she was bringing upon her own life and her husband's by this vice; and there are several letters of hers to Madame de Maintenon which show how strong a hold she had obtained over the impulsive, unstable, affectionate, and most charming girl.

Monseigneur [her husband] had invited me (she writes) to go to Meudon again on Tuesday, because I could not walk out to-day, and there we could do so if it is fine, and if the weather is bad we should play cards. Now, my dear aunt, what would you like me to do? If you do not wish me to go, I will send word to Monseigneur that I must beg him to excuse me, for I cannot go. Indeed, there is nothing I would not do to be able to preserve your friendship for me, and I flatter myself that it is not yet quite lost.

In another letter, she speaks of "that accursed *lansquenet*"

as having given Madame de Maintenon great pain, and wishes that the King would forbid her to play.

About this time Madame de Maintenon wrote down a series of admirable notes for the use of the princess, which when the King saw, he begged that they might be preserved for her children. Madame de Maintenon, however, modestly objected to this, and got back the manuscript into her own hands. Whether she wished to destroy it is not certain ; but happily she handed it over to the Dames de St. Louis, who preserved it with the other treasures of St. Cyr.

But while Madame de Maintenon had been giving up even the last fraction of her time and rest to the education in the highest sense of the Duchess of Burgundy, the distant and long-murmuring storm produced by Quietism burst upon her head, and for a while entirely destroyed her peace by its effects upon the community at St. Cyr. The results of these convulsions, in the *lettres de cachet* given by the King, we have seen ; but, as regards Madame de Maisonfort, M. Geffroy points out that Madame de Maintenon did not show the kindness, consideration, and charity that so illuminate the life of Bossuet in these miserable religious disturbances. Although Madame de Maisonfort was the chief offender—the ringleader, so to speak—of the malcontents at St. Cyr, the great Bishop of Meaux gave her a refuge within a convent in his diocese, where he replied to her lengthy, hair-splitting, and often opinionated objections with a patience, a fulness, and a scrupulous care that never relaxed or wearied. Madame de Maintenon had engaged to support this poor lady, whom she had persistently urged, almost to driving, into the religious bonds of the community of St. Louis ; but the allotted pension

was seldom paid, and the bishop never asked for it, but supported Madame de Maisonfort himself. Bossuet's fame as a writer and a great and successful defender of the faith is known far and wide, but probably no work of his has crowned him with greater reward than his patient and loving charity to the poor Chanoinesse, whom her once too flattering friend seems to have strangely deserted in her needs.

CHAPTER XIV.

1696—1704.

BEFORE the subject of Quietism is finally dismissed, it will be well to note a few points of its progress in France, and how it came about that eminent ecclesiastics, like Fénelon and Cardinal de Noailles, became involved in its meshes. Pasquier Quesnel, a Father of the French Oratory, wrote a little book called "*Réflexions Morales sur le Nouveau Testament*," covertly defending certain vices and interpretations of Jansenius. The Fathers of the Oratory detected the insidious nature of the "*Réflexions*," and insisted on Quesnel's signing the Pope's condemnation of Jansenius and his works. Quesnel refused to do this, left the Oratory, and went to Holland in 1678. The first small issue of the "*Réflexions*," which seemed a pious little book, had been approved by the Bishop of Chalons in 1671, and in this first edition five only of the propositions condemned by Clement XI. were to be found. But this first little work was increased by Quesnel to four bulky volumes, to which he cunningly prefixed the same approbation given by the Bishop of Châlons in 1671, though the bishop himself had been dead twelve years, and the opinions put forth had not only been largely added to, but abounded with more vital error. Unfortunately, without knowing the circumstances,

and probably acting upon the approbation, which could then only have been called fraudulent, the Archbishop of Paris (de Noailles) gave his approbation also to the "*Réflexions*" in 1695, and it was this act which aroused the stormy dissensions that agitated France from one end to the other for many years.

Bossuet and the Bishop of Chartres, with the whole Society of the Jesuits, sustained the King and Madame de Maintenon in upholding the orthodox side, which by that time had additional evidence of the gradual deterioration of Quesnel and his party. Quesnel had strictly allied himself in Holland with Arnaud, and was accustomed to make stolen visits into France, sometimes disguised as a Benedictine monk, at others as a priest of St. Geneviève. Wherever he went, he and those associated with him spread a flood of pamphlets, leaflets, and copies of, or extracts from, the "*Réflexions*," full of new religious errors. Bossuet drew up a list of one hundred and one of these errors, which he submitted to the Archbishop of Paris, who, with blamable weakness and indiscretion, sent it on to Quesnel. Quesnel impudently returned as an answer that these hundred and one errors were a hundred and one capital truths, and that the "*Réflexions*" needed no correction at all; and overweening self-love, as well as the persistent obstinacy of the Archbishop, led him to sustain the reputation of a book of which he had once approved. In 1700, the Archbishop was offered the cardinal's hat, and went to Rome to assist at the election of Clement XI., which threw discouragement upon the orthodox side for a while. The Bishop of Chartres, however, firmly held his position, and, with great respect, told the Archbishop that he would now

feel doubly the condemnation of the "Réflexions" by the Holy See. The Archbishop was so carried beyond his self-control by his obstinacy, that he exclaimed in reply, "If that should happen, I shall make a schism!" which might have happened had not a long course of events proved him to be better than his passionate words. Four years passed away, and then the Bishop of Apt (1704) boldly condemned the "Réflexions," and complaints of the Cardinal-Archbishop's obstinacy were carried to Rome; while he, on his side, declared that the whole matter was stirred up by the Jesuits, whom he called his bitter enemies. Clement XI. had long known the secret wiles of Jansenism, and, though he was personally a warm friend to Cardinal de Noailles, he ordered the Inquisition to examine the "Réflexions" thoroughly. According to their wont, the Inquisitors gave full time to the work, and in 1708 declared that the book "Réflexions Morales" of Quesnel was "founded on a bad and condemned version of the Scriptures [the Bible of Mons]; that it held seditious, rash, pernicious, erroneous, and already condemned opinions, distinctly savouring of the heresies of Jansenius." The decree of the Holy Office was immediately made public by the Pope's orders; yet, though deeply moved and wounded, Cardinal de Noailles would not retract his opinion, and declared that the Jesuits had obtained the decree out of personal hatred to him, and upon distorted representations.

Père de la Chaise died the year after the decree (1709); and the King, having declared that he would never choose any other confessor than a Jesuit, referred the matter, as usual, to Madame de Maintenon and her adviser, the Bishop

of Chartres, of whose orthodoxy and wise decision he was sure. These two consulted the *curé* of St. Sulpice, an eminently holy man, and it was decided that Père le Tellier should be chosen as the King's director. He was a plain man, of quite low birth, very learned, and exceedingly jealous against the innovations of Jansenism. Cardinal de Noailles was furious at the appointment of one of his enemies to be the King's spiritual guide, and he had soon fresh mortifications to suffer. Emboldened and encouraged by the decree from Rome, the Bishops of Luçon, La Rochelle, and Gap publicly condemned the "*Réflexions*," and a pastoral publishing the condemnation was pasted up on the cathedral of Nôtre Dame, the Archbishop's palace, and the gates of Paris.

Cardinal de Noailles took the pitiful revenge of ordering the superior of St. Sulpice to expel the nephews of the Bishops of Gap and Luçon, who were then studying in the seminary. The aggrieved bishops appealed to the King, as did also the Cardinal on his side and in person. The King received him very kindly, and promised him a special and leisurely audience at Marly, where he was going shortly. But the Cardinal, with his usual haughty intemperance, brooked no delay, and published a manifesto, condemning the pastorals of the three bishops, and forbidding them to be read in the archdiocese.

The King was naturally much displeased at this assumption of the Archbishop, and sent him word by the Secretary of State, Pontchartrain, that, as he had taken it upon himself to do justice, he had nothing further to ask of the King, and forbade him to appear at Marly. Then the Cardinal wrote most urgently to his firm friend,

Madame de Maintenon, beseeching her to plead his cause. But she was now too well acquainted with his character, and so well aware how it behoved her to repress his presumption, that she answered only in a few wise words:—

Yesterday in the *salon* [reception] at Marly, people were saying that hitherto they had been sorry for you, but that now you were without excuse. . . . And now again, once more, do not quarrel with the King. You know how religious he is, how kind to all your family, and how specially he esteems yourself. Is it possible that you could wish to add to his sorrows, and that any personal interest could make you break with him?

Even after this letter the Cardinal persecuted her with pleadings to be allowed to see the King, who was so weary of the whole miserable course of the religious dissensions, added to the calamities and starvation of his people, that he referred the matter to the Dauphin. Once more Madame de Maintenon wrote to Cardinal de Noailles:—

This is the last time I shall wish to write to you upon this miserable business, for I have too many reasons for not meddling in it. I shall resume my own proper office, which is to pray that God may turn all to His glory, to the good of the Church, and to your own benefit, monseigneur, in which I am keenly interested.

Madame de Maintenon kept her word, feeling most bitterly how much better it would have been for her to have restricted herself to this office from the beginning, instead of moving Heaven and earth to obtain the appointment of this most troublesome Archbishop.

Meanwhile the commission under the Dauphin advised Cardinal de Noailles to condemn the “*Réflexions* ;” but his self-love was still in the ascendant, and he answered

by again accusing the Jesuits of having maligned him. His arrogance even went the length of begging the King to "unmask the Jesuits," and to give up Père le Tellier as his confessor, writing vehement letters to Madame de Maintenon to obtain the same end. To these outrageous letters she returned calm, moderating answers; and the Dauphin wisely advised the King to refer the whole question to Rome, which he did.

During the course of these religious battles, Madame de Maintenon's pen was never idle, nor did she discourse idly with it. There are charming letters to the Comte d'Ayen, one of the best members of the great de Noailles family. In one of these letters she mentions a diversion which seems dear alike to great and little people:—

December 19, 1700.

The *bouts rimés* seem to us very good, and gave us some little pleasure, for we began to weary of the monotony of the evenings, and of seeing it always noted, "They drew, and then played at *brélan*" [a game of cards]. The King of Spain * shows from time to time that he has some taste for intellectual games, and I have no doubt others would also, were it not for the miserable passion for cards, which, without giving great pleasure to anybody, disgusts others. We were surprised to discover a poet in M. d'Heudicourt. M. de Noailles is of great use to the young people, for he never loses an opportunity of speaking of wisdom. I am afraid, my dear count, that this journey will not turn out so pleasant as you hope, but I comfort myself with the thought that you will get out of it all that can be got. I beg of you to give my very humble thanks to Monseigneur the Duke of Berry for the quince marmalade he sent me. I see plainly that he is a sensible man, who prefers making presents to paying compliments. . . . I think it was you whom they were galloping after at seven

* The Duke of Anjou had succeeded to the Spanish crown as Philip V.

o'clock in the morning,* for I have scarcely any one left since my equerry failed me. . . .

In 1701, Madame de Maintenon found time, among all her correspondents—which then included the King of Spain (Philip V.)—to write to Madame de Gruel, one of the Dames de St. Louis, about her manner with the children. She certainly was fully capable of giving what Madame de Gruel herself would have called *un rude savon*.

1701.

You admire what I do for your class a great deal too much ; but such as it is, you do not imitate it enough. You speak to your children with a bluntness, harshness, and abruptness which will close all their hearts to you. They ought to feel that you love them, that you are sorry for their faults on their account, and that you are full of hope that they will be corrected. You must manage them with skill, encourage them, praise them ; in one word, you must make use of every means with them except roughness, which will never lead any one to God. You are too much the same with everybody, and you would live admirably with saints ; but you must learn how to suit yourself to all sorts of people, and especially to the ways of a good mother who has a large family of children whom she loves all alike.

There is another letter to Madame de Gruel of the same year :—

1701.

I have always forgotten to tell what I observed, a few days ago, when I heard you explaining the Gospel. I thought that you embraced too many subjects, whereas children need only a few. You say too much yourself, and I think you should make them speak more, that you may see if they [both] hear and understand.

* Madame de Maintenon herself usually started for St. Cyr at seven o'clock, and the Comte d'Ayen had several times galloped alongside her coach ; to which she refers.

I discovered also that you are very eloquent. For instance, you told the girls that they must be eternally divorced from sin. It is true, and it was very well said, but I do not believe there are three girls in your class who know what a divorce is. Be simple, and think only of making yourself thoroughly understood. I think, my dear daughter, that you would like me to advise you according to what I have seen you do. I beg of you to suggest to your children all those practices of piety that I have always wished to see among you—a horror of sin, the sense of God's presence, docility of conduct. I beg of you once more to lead them according to the spirit of the Church, and I have drawn up a little abridgment* which should be followed. Keep one uniform method during the classes, as far as possible, and let us know everything you do. You can scarcely conceive how easy you will make the conduct of the classes for the mistresses by this means. Good-bye, my dear daughter.

At the beginning of the next year Madame de Maintenon wrote a few words to Cardinal de Noailles, carefully avoiding controversial topics :—

February 26, 1702.

. . . I know of nothing new since I had the honour of seeing you, but I forgot to ask you for a sermon from Père Massillon for St. Cyr. He could choose his own day and preach as he liked. He would be in a chair at the grating. There would be only ourselves, and I should not let any *externes* know. If you should make this petition from me, monseigneur, say something good of the Dames de St. Louis, and tell him that at St. Cyr one breathes only the spirit of simplicity, teachableness, and humility. If, after saying all that, it does not suit him to preach to us, I shall be quite able to take a refusal.

Madame de Maintenon wrote at much greater length to her old friend Madame de Glapion towards the end of the same year :—

* On the methods to be used for the different feasts of the year.

November 9, 1702.

. . . You will never be satisfied, my dear daughter, till you love God with your whole heart, and I do not say this on account of the profession to which you are bound. Solomon told you long ago that, after having sought and found and tasted of all pleasure, he acknowledged that everything is vanity and vexation of spirit, except loving and serving God. Why cannot I give you all my own experience? Why cannot I show you the weariness that devours the great ones of the earth, and the trouble they have in filling up their days? Do you not see how I myself am dying of sadness under brighter circumstances than can easily be imagined, and that it is only by God's help that I do not fall under it? Once I was young and pretty; when I grew older I spent some years in intellectual enjoyment; then I came into [high] favour; and I declare to you, my dear daughter, that all these conditions of life [only] left a frightful blank weariness, and a craving desire for some new thing, because in all of them there was nothing to satisfy fully. We are never at rest till we have given ourselves to God, and with that determined will of which I have sometimes spoken to you. Then we feel that there is nothing more to seek, and we have reached all that is good on earth. We have sorrows, but we have also a solid satisfaction and peace of heart in the midst of the greatest troubles.

But you will say to me, "Can we be religious at our will?" Yes, my dear daughter, we can, and we are not allowed to think that God will fail us. "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." These are His words, but we must seek Him with humility and simplicity. St. Paul may well have known more than Ananias, but he went nevertheless to find him, and learnt through him what he was to do. You will never know it of yourself; you must humble yourself. You have in you the remains of pride, which you disguise to yourself as a taste for intellectual things. You ought not to have it, and still less should you seek to satisfy it with a confessor. The simpler he is, the better for you, and you should submit yourself like a child. How will you bear the crosses that God will send you through life, if

you stumble at the Norman or Picard accent, and are disgusted with a man because he is not as sublime as Racine? That poor man would have edified you if you had seen his humility in his illness,* and his penitence as to intellectual self-seeking. He did not send then for any fashionable director, and only saw the good priest of his parish. I have seen another great man die, who had written the finest works one can see, but had never allowed them to be printed, not wishing to assume the name of author. He burnt everything that he ever wrote, and only a few fragments remain in my memory.† Do not let us occupy ourselves here with what we must sooner or later give up. You have not lived very long, yet you have to renounce the tenderness of your heart and the fastidiousness of your mind. Go to God, my dear daughter, and everything shall be given you. Write to me as often as you like. . . . I should be well pleased to lead you to God. I should thus contribute to His glory, I should make one happy whom I particularly love, and I should render a great service to an institution not indifferent to me.

There is an interesting little letter to another Dame de St. Louis, Madame de Beaulieu, first mistress, of the following year :—

October 10, 1703.

A first mistress should make a good figure at the recreation, and should be the one to tell my news to the others; but I have nothing bright to say. My heart is heavy with the sorrow of our princess [the Duchess of Burgundy] since Monsieur de Savoie [Duke of Savoy] declared war with the King.

Oh, my dear daughters, how happy you are to have left the world! It promises joy and gives none. The King of England [James, the Chevalier de St. George] was playing yesterday in my room with the Duchess of Burgundy and her ladies at all sorts of games. Our King and the Queen of England [Mary Beatrice of Modena]

* Racine died in 1699.

† It was never known to whom this alludes.—Geffroy.

were looking on. There was nothing but dancing, laughing, and transports of pleasure, and yet almost all there were stifling keen pain at their hearts. The world is certainly a delusion; you cannot be too grateful to God for having taken you out of it.

Early in 1704, Madame de Maintenon wrote again to Madame de Glapion a letter so full of spiritual common sense as to be of lasting value :—

April 24, 1704.

I pray with all my heart that God will give His blessing to your retreat. Do not doubt that the difficulty you have in giving an account of yourself to your confessor comes from the want of humility. This is the virtue that costs you most, and therefore is the one most necessary for you. Ask it of God at this most fitting moment for receiving His grace. My dear daughter, you are a Christian and a nun; your life ought to be hidden, mortified, stripped of pleasure, chaste in all things, and contenting you with the part you have chosen. You do not repent having done so; take it, then, with its austerities and its safeguards. You would have had more pleasure in the world, but, according to all appearances, you would have been lost. Racine would have entertained you, and would have dragged you into Jansenist cabals. Monseigneur de Cambrai [Fénelon] would have satisfied and even increased your fastidious taste, and you would have become a Quietist. Rejoice now in the happiness of security. Would you rather that your house should be dazzling than sound? What would it have served you to have shone in it if you were to be buried under it? I desire for you, my dear daughter, what I wish for myself, for I am in a position to choose, and have the same confessor as yourself. God gives me grace to prefer his discourse to the finest sermons I could ever hear. Sacrifice your dislikes on this head, and you will gain more by that than by all the austerities that you do not ask to practise and yet are troubled by not asking for. You speak very well at the recreations; do not lose the fruit of what you say by spreading your discontent, for

that is one of the greatest wrongs you can do your Sisters and your institute. All the good that is done must be effected by the confessors and superiors ; therefore love them yourself and make them beloved, respect them and make others respect them. Commit as few sins as you can yourself, my dear child, but, above all things, never be responsible for the sins of others.

May God preserve you from a confessor in whom you should feel delight ! You are well off when he leads you wisely. You need nothing, and all you do is meritorious so long as you are in the spirit of faith.

Why has God given you an intellect and such powers of reason ? Do you believe that it is to talk well, to read pleasant books, to criticize prose and poetry, to compare clever writers and authors with one another ? Such plans could not proceed from Him. He has gifted you in this way to serve a great work established for His glory ; therefore turn your mind towards this idea, as solid as the others are frivolous. Come back from your retreat altogether large, strong, and zealous for the good of your foundation ; leave childish ideas to children, and come and help to establish a house that will do great good. Everything you have received is for you to make profit by, and you must give an account of it. I have not observed the much speaking of which you complain. It is necessary to say a good deal to form other minds and to make them hear reason.

Do not fancy that you are harsh towards the sick and their weaknesses. You are charitable and gentle, but you wish to make them reasonable, and they ought to be so. The wish to be approved is natural ; try to love good for its own sake, and to look to God alone. Self-love will glide in everywhere, but you will not consent to it.

Why can you not bear to study the Catechism ? Does it not contain the whole of religion ? The necessity of making all Christians learn it has caused whatever we believe to be put in questions and answers, to make it easier, more intelligible, and shorter ; but in whatever way our mysteries [of faith] are spoken

of, are they not always the same? What do you see in the Catechism that lowers them? These ideas are the remains of vanity, that does not fit in with things common to everybody, and that is always seeking something higher. The sublimest theology could not speak to you of the Trinity otherwise than it is explained in the Catechism; and in what you feel about this there is still matter for sacrifice, and your mind must become as simple as your heart. What do you wish to learn, my dear daughter? I can answer for it, after much experience, that when you have read a great deal, you will see that you know nothing. Your religion ought to be the whole of your knowledge. Your time is no longer your own. God has given you all the intelligence that reading gives to others.

As to pleasure, I should like you to have it. It is necessary to you; but content yourself with that which suits your state of life. Set your mind, not toward distastes, but towards being pleased with what God has settled for you. What book is it that you should like to read and do not?

I should not have been as strict as your confessor as to music, but he has his reasons. I thank God that you love prayer and the Office. I scarcely ever see you at those times that I do not regret not being a nun. Amuse yourself with your little girls; you will always be extremely useful to them. The matter that concerns myself need not give you the least pain; only offer yourself to God for the more grievous privations. You ought to wish to satisfy me as long as I have a mission to help you. Do not trouble yourself as to your want of fervour, and that you have no desire for austerities. If God had required many of these, He would not have put you in a house where they are not used. Love and serve your institute, and He will be satisfied with you; the violence you do your nature, which leads you to form friendships, is better than all hair shirts and disciplines. I do not spare you, but I depend so strongly on your opinion that I do not try to see your faults. . . .

CHAPTER XV.

1704—1705.

THE Comte d'Ayen, who had so often played equerry in the early mornings to Madame de Maintenon, had married Mdlle. d'Aubigné in 1698; and in 1704 the Duc de Noailles made over the title to his son. At the same time Madame de Maintenon gave her niece the use of the Maintenon estate as a residence, retaining, however, the life interest for herself. She wrote to the young duchess on her going there :—

October 3, 1704.

I am very glad you should go to Maintenon. I have sent word to Lacouture [the housekeeper] to make over to you everything that is there, and to tell you of anything wanting, that you may supply it. You know me so well that you will believe me when I say that it will not cost me a penny to receive you there. Make great friends with Lacouture; she ought to serve you as long as she lives, and you ought to take care of her always. I have heard that you do not do much for poor little Maligny,* and that she is desolate enough; that Madame de Champeron will not take charge of her, and that the child seems to be misborn. If all this is true, she must be sent back to Madame de St. Remi des Landes, who will know how to take care of her and is very fond

* Perhaps one of Charles d'Aubigné's children; an orphan adopted by Madame de Maintenon—Geffroy.

of her. Do not think I am vexed about this; I can easily take her away. I am full of pain at the Duc de Noailles' state.* I am afraid he will not last long. Try to comfort him, my dear niece. You fill the position of a good wife. How will you live without Mdlle. de Noailles? They say that you love one another to excess; and you are quite right. I am better than I ought to be, and I love you as tenderly as you can wish. I know that this is saying a good deal, but I am able to bear out what I say.

That same year, 1704, it fell to Madame de Maintenon's lot to write a much more important letter, which was laid up in the archives of the French Foreign Office.

The younger sister of the Duchess of Burgundy, the still more charming Marie Louise of Savoy, had, in 1701, married the King of Spain, Philip V., formerly Duke of Anjou. This beautiful and graceful girl was called upon, at the age of thirteen, to marry a weak king of eighteen, and to wear the thorny crown of a great, but still only partially civilized and deeply prejudiced country, full of jealousies and cabals, and then chafing under the necessity of accepting a king of French blood. There was given to the young Queen, to conduct her to Madrid, a former friend of Madame de Maintenon, the Princess des Ursins, who remained in Spain as *camarera mayor*. She was a woman distinguished, even among her seventeenth-century contemporaries, for her beauty (which was still brilliant at seventy), her wit, her knowledge of the world, and her extraordinary gifts of attracting and winning those whom she chose to win. Princess des Ursins became a constant resource and support to the young Queen, and in scarcely less measure to the indolent, pleasant, and affectionate young King, her husband.

* The old duke.

This was extremely displeasing to the French ambassador, Cardinal d'Estrées, who had, on his part, an intense love of absolute rule, and who conceived that the King should be entirely under his own guidance. Thence followed innumerable heartburnings, jealousies, and quarrels. The Cardinal accused the *camarera* of prejudicing the young Queen against the Spaniards at Court, and of exciting in the country an increasing hatred of France. There raged so fierce a war between the ecclesiastic and the lady, that Louis XIV. desired his grandson to dismiss Princess des Ursins and send her back to France. The King was obliged to obey, but his young Queen was inconsolable. She could not live without her princess ; and she demanded her return so vehemently, and with such petulance of reproach, that Louis XIV. was deeply offended. He had already, to please the Queen of Spain, recalled Cardinal d'Estrées, and replaced him as ambassador by the Duc de Gramont—a most agreeable and conciliatory man ; but Marie Louise refused to be conciliated. The King then wrote to her himself a very stately and kinglike letter, in which he blamed Princess des Ursins for having interfered overmuch in public affairs, and reproved the Queen for her unwise and excessive partiality to a favourite. “ People in our position,” he said, “ ought to rise above private quarrels, and to rule their conduct according to their own interest and the good of their subjects, which are, in fact, the same.” But the King spoke in vain ; and hence the letter which was sent her by Madame de Maintenon, who had never spoken with such severe majesty, or, in spite of the curious interchange of persons which sounds so inaccurate to us, more entirely to the purpose :—

October 5, 1704.

I am touched by your Majesty's sufferings, but I should be much more so, if I saw that she were indifferent to the things said about her which she does me the honour to write. Nothing could be more derogatory to your Majesty ; and as she desires me to speak freely, I shall venture to agree with her that to make people imagine that she does not love the King, her grandfather [Louis XIV.], is to accuse her of every sort of fault. He does, indeed, deserve the esteem and affection of your Majesty, and I think the King of Spain has not allowed her to remain ignorant of what our King is. But, madame, however powerful you all [kings and queens] may be on earth, you cannot prevent wicked people from wishing to sow discord everywhere, as your Majesty says. It seems, from everything that comes back to us from your Court, that it is full of cabals ; everybody writes according to his own prepossession, and it is difficult, from so far away, to unravel the truth. As for myself, I have never believed that your Majesty did not love the King [Louis XIV.], or that she had a great dislike to the French people. She herself is half a French woman, she has a French husband, whom she warmly loves, and her interests are bound up with France. She has had near her one who could not hate her own nation, and who has not separated your Majesty from it. I have always looked upon these reports as coming from either ill-affected Spaniards or from ill-judging Frenchmen who desired to be preferred by your Majesty to Spaniards, which ought never to be. Your Majesty sees by the King's conduct [Louis XIV.] how much he desires that you should make yourself beloved in Spain, and how quickly he recalls Frenchmen who have given you the least trouble.

What cure is there for these adverse reports and the trouble they have given your Majesty ? I see none but their confidence in the King's ambassador ; and how can business be conducted in any other way ? This ambassador is the King's choice ; he has no interest in Spain ; he can only wish to satisfy his master and to succeed in his office, and he can only succeed in it by uniting your Majesties more and more [with the King], which

ought not to be difficult, as there is already the tie of blood and union of interests. Since your Majesty has done me the honour to command my advice, I have no other to give than to put trust in the principal persons sent by the King, her grandfather, and to act with them in such strict concert that no intrigue or [adverse] reports can disturb it. I am certain that the King depends only upon what he hears from his ambassador. Would he be likely to send him false reports, which could only give pain and trouble? The bad understanding between Monseigneur d'Estrées and Madame des Ursins has done mischief which must be repaired; but I beseech your Majesty not to think that there is any wish to ruin Madame des Ursins, or that she is accused of anything but of having wished to rule exclusively, and thus to render the King's ambassadors useless. There is no bitterness against her, and every day will give your Majesty cause to know it. It is true that there is no wish to enter into her self-justification against Monseigneur d'Estrées, nor to see the whole Court divided between the two parties. Nothing is thought of but the benefit of both the kings; the rest is their own private affair, and the result of old quarrels which are said to have lasted ever since they [the Cardinal and princess] were at Rome. Otherwise, nothing is more praiseworthy than your Majesty's friendship for this princess, whose faithful service in her office does her honour; but this friendship should have its limits, and neither disturb her own peace nor her good understanding with the King. It is very true, madame, that I meddle in nothing and that I can do nothing: but it is also true that I am deeply interested in everything; that I earnestly desire your union [with Louis XIV.], your happiness, your firm footing in Spain, and your [public] reputation; that I desire that your Majesty should never derogate from the idea we have formed of her, widely different indeed from the reports of which she complains, and that are most assuredly not listened to here. The Duc de Gramont is an honourable man, and so is Marshal Tessé; they only desire what is right. I hope God will support your Majesties, and that everything will turn out to their

satisfaction. I have really abused your Majesty's patience, but it seemed to me that she would wish me to express myself freely to her. There is nothing that she would not forgive me if she knew the sincerity of my respectful attachment to your Majesties.

The day after writing thus at length to the young Queen of Spain, she sent one of her short, characteristic notes to the Duc de Noailles (as the Comte d'Ayen now was), enclosing a letter of a M. de Valincour, a friend of Racine and Boileau, and secretary to the Admiral Comte de Toulouse.

October 6, 1704.

How is it, my dear duke, that I hear nothing of you, and that I myself—wretched, low-spirited, ill, and overburthened with vexations—am obliged to prick you up and remind you that I am still in this world? Here I am, indeed, doing everything I would not do, and scarcely anything that I should like to do. I cannot make up my mind to burn M. de Valincour's letter without any one having seen it. There is no one but you to whom I can show it, and I am not afraid of your making mischief between him and M. Pontchartrain [then minister of naval affairs]. Good-bye, my dear duke.

The letter she sent to the duke, which remained as it was, attached to that of Madame de Maintenon in M. de Longuerne's manuscript edition, fol. 15, contained a certain eulogy of herself, which, though affected and adulatory, is worth preserving :—

For a long time, madame, I have been under the idea that it was necessary to pay court to you in the same way as to those angelic beings who see and hear everything, but whom no one sees and to whom no one can speak, and whose very existence is known only by the favours received from them; whom the greatest events never cause to forget the smallest, and who are

busy at the same time with the needs of the general world and those of the least private person. In a word, who have no occupation in the lower universe but that of hindering all the evil possible, and doing all the good that can be done. Therefore, whenever I shall henceforth see you go by in that great black hood in which you are wrapt as in a cloud, I shall believe that you can read my heartfelt wishes, madame, that you may yet enjoy for several years, and in better times than these, the pleasure of doing good and protecting deserving people wherever they are to be found. This is your only worthy reward.*

Here is a cold little letter of the same year to Madame de Caylus, which shows how sadly the miserable religious divisions of Jansenism had crept in between the most loving relations and friends :—

November 15, 1704.

What is this forgetfulness that you complain of? Is it that I did not write to you after the death of M. de Caylus? You know whether I felt it or not, and we ought not to need any compliments. I am so ill and so old that for some time past I have brought down my letters to such as are necessary, and I never write any out of politeness only. Besides, why should you wish to depend upon me? You are more than of an age when you are able to conduct yourself rightly. What would you have changed on the very eve of my death? It is true that you might have been a great comfort to me if you had acted so that I could have had full intercourse with you, which can only be when there is oneness of mind. However, madame, I will see you whenever you like to spend a Sunday at St. Cyr; that is the day when I am most often there. But I should like to be told beforehand; for perhaps you might find some of your enemies, or I might have arranged for some one to come to me there.

Good-bye, my dear niece. I think I must call you so, lest you should think I were angry with you.

* Geffroy.

Madame de Caylus, who had given her aunt a great deal of pain by putting herself under the direction of a certain Père de la Tour, suspected of Jansenist tendencies, gave him up soon afterwards, and returned to her old companions and to her affectionate intimacy with Madame de Maintenon, who always delighted in her talents and charm, and evidently soon found that she had time to write as before to her niece :—

January 14, 1705.

I have just received your letter of the 11th of this month [January]. Take a middle course between giving yourself up to pleasant society and plunging yourself into seclusion. This last you will not be able to bear, and the former will separate you more from God and your children than the Court would do. Abbé Gobelin, who was very sensible, was delighted when I left off frequenting the Hôtel de Richelieu to settle at St. Germain, and I often see how right he was. I do not disapprove of your meetings with Abbé Testu ; Madame la Chancelière is the best woman in the world, and the society [of the people] you tell me of is excellent, though I could have wished that they were not so numerous. . . . Good-bye. Do not be afraid of writing to me, but do not reckon on having always such prompt answers.

There is another letter to Madame de Caylus in April :—

April 1, 1705.

You do the commissions given you with such diligence that it requires a good deal of money to provide for them. I can scarcely believe that there could be a more costly stuff than the one you have sent me, but anything is bearable for a petticoat. I have nothing new to say, but the irritation [about you] still goes on. You only became pious from political motives, and your one idea is of marrying again—these are the topics upon which something fresh is embroidered every day. Do not worry about them, my dear niece. If your conduct is pleasing to God your enemies

will be forced into silence, and a reputation will be established which will be worth more than all the treasures of this world. I am much troubled about Madame la Princesse des Ursins,* and very sorry not to be able to show her attentions which would prove my interest in her well-being, both for herself and for Spain. I embrace you heartily. Just now I am very well."

The same date is given, even the same month—April, 1705—to a very remarkable conversation† between Madame de Maintenon and Madame de Glapion at St. Cyr, which perhaps, of all the written accounts that remain, furnishes the fullest and most astonishing record of Madame de Maintenon's capacity for work and self-sacrificing devotedness to what came before her as her duties.

Madame said to me (says Madame de Glapion), "It gives me great joy to see the gate shut when I come in here [St. Cyr], and I never go away without pain. Often, on returning to Versailles, I think, 'This is the world, and to all appearance the world for which Jesus Christ would not pray ‡ on the eve of His death.' I know that there are several good souls at Court, and that God has saints in all conditions of life; but it is certain that in general that is the central point of what is called the world; that there all the passions are living—self-interest, ambition, envy, love of pleasure, etc. This is the world so often condemned by God. I assure you that these thoughts give me feelings of sadness and a horror of the place where, nevertheless, I am bound to live." . . . I said that at least she saw none of these things in this house, and that everything went so well here that it was a place of rest for her, where she could be solaced for all that she found elsewhere. Madame replied, "That is exactly so. What should I do without this house? I should not be able to live. I believe

* Princess des Ursins had obtained leave to return to Versailles, and was restored to favour.

† Written down by Madame de Glapion.

‡ St. John xvii. 9.

God has granted it me not only to secure my salvation, but also for my resting-place ; for it not only serves me for prayer and recollection, but also for recreation ; it makes me forget all other business. When I am busy here, when we are in council or some one comes to speak to me, I do not feel in truth as if there were any Court, and this gives me time to breathe."

"I thought this morning," I said to her, "when I saw you at Communion, that it was perhaps a long time since you had such a morning, when you could pray to God and meditate at ease." "That is very true," said madame, "and I have often told you that I am obliged to choose a time for my Mass and prayers when every one else is asleep. If I did not, I could not go to Mass at all ; for when once people begin to come in to me, I cannot reckon again on being my own mistress ; not a moment is left me." I told her that, without making comparisons, I fancied that her room was like those great shops which when once opened are never empty, and oblige the shopkeepers to stay there all day. Madame replied, "That is indeed so. They begin to come about half-past seven. First there is M. Maréchal [the King's first physician]. He has no sooner gone out than M. Fagon comes in [the ordinary physician]. He is succeeded by M. Bloin [the King's first valet], or some one else who comes to ask how I am. Then there are some exceedingly urgent letters that I am obliged to write at that time. Next come people of the greatest consequence ; one day M. de Chamillart [the Minister], another the Archbishop ; to-day some general in command of an army, who is just starting ; to-morrow an audience that has been asked for, and almost always this is under circumstances when it is impossible to put it off, as when officers and others are going away [from Paris]. The Duc du Maine waited in my ante-room the other day till M. de Chamillart had finished. When he was gone, the Duc du Maine came in, and kept me till the King arrived. For there is even a sort of tacit agreement that they need not go till some superior comer drives them away. When the King comes in, of course everybody else leaves, and he remains with me till he goes to Mass. I do not know if you are taking in that in the midst

of all this I am not yet dressed ; if I were, I should not have had time for my prayers. I am still, therefore, in my nightcap, but my room, notwithstanding, is just like a church. It is a regular procession ; everybody passes through, and the comings and goings are perpetual.

“ When the King has heard Mass he comes back again to my room. Then the Duchess of Burgundy comes with a great many ladies, and they stay while I am at dinner. It seems that now, at least, there might be some time allowed for myself, but you will see in what way. I am apprehensive lest the Duchess of Burgundy should do something awkward, and [I want to know] if she is well with her husband. I try to make her say a word to this one, and am watching whether she is treating that other one well. It is necessary to entertain the company, and in some way to keep them all in union. If anybody does anything indiscreet, I feel it ; I am worried by the way something that is said is taken. There is a strife of minds that is unlike anything else. I am hemmed in by a circle of ladies, so that I cannot ask for anything to drink. I look round at them sometimes, and while I look I say, ‘ I am very much honoured, but nevertheless I wish I had a footman.’ Then every one of them wants to serve me, and hurries to bring me what I want, so that it creates a fresh worry and annoyance. At last they go away to their own dinner, for I dine at twelve o’clock with Madame d’Heudicourt * and Madame de Dangeau, who are ill. So at last I am left with them only ; everybody else has gone. If there were only one day when I could amuse myself, as it is called, for a moment, it would be, then, either to chat or play *trictrac* [backgammon] ; but usually Monseigneur [the Dauphin] takes that time to come and see me, because he either is not going to dine, or has dined early to go a-hunting. He comes, therefore, after the others, and he is the

* Intimate as Mdle. Bonne de Pons with Madame de Maintenon as Madame Scarron in the Hôtels de Richelieu and d’Albret. When married to the Marquis d’Heudicourt, she made one of a pious little society of Court ladies set on foot by Madame de Maintenon, of which she says in a letter to the Duchess de Ventadour in 1692, “ All the convent is scattered.”—Geffroy.

most difficult man in the world to entertain, for he never says a word. It is necessary, however, that he should be entertained, as I am in my own home. If I were at any one else's house, I should only have to take a chair behind the others and say nothing if I wished. The ladies with me can do this if they like, but as I am in my own room, I must pay for [the honour] personally, and find topics for conversation, which is not very amusing.

"Then they come back from dinner. The King, with all the princesses and the whole royal family, come into my room, and make it frightfully hot. There is conversation, and the King remains about half an hour, and then goes away, but he only; all the rest are there still, and as the King is no longer there, they draw nearer to me. They all get round me, and I must listen to some jest of the Maréchale de C——, the witty saying of this one, the story told by that other. None of these good ladies have anything to do; they look very fresh, and have not done a single thing all the morning. It is very different for me, who have plenty of other things to do but chatter, and often I am suffering inwardly from some sorrow, some bad news. For instance, this attack upon Verrue* which must be made. I have all this on my mind; I am thinking that perhaps a thousand men are dying, and others suffering." I interrupted madame by saying, "I was just now thinking, madame, while you were speaking, that there was at least one advantage in all this press of occupations and business, which is that as they follow one another [so quickly] you have not time to think of sad things." "It would seem so," replied madame; "but they do not hinder me from dwelling upon them and bearing every day a burthen which makes my heart ache, yet I must nevertheless laugh, which is most painful. But to end my day. After they have stayed some time like this, they go away to their homes, and then what do you think happens? Some one of the ladies wishes to speak to me in private. She takes me by the hand, and leads me into my little room, often to tell me extremely disagreeable and tiresome details. For you may imagine that they never want to speak of anything that concerns

* Taken by the Duc de Vendôme a few days afterwards.

myself ; it is of matters passing in their own families. One has had a quarrel with her husband, another wants to beg something of the King ; one has had some evil turn done her, another has suffered from some misunderstanding ; some mischief to this one, some family disturbance to that. I am obliged to listen to it all, and those who are not friendly to me do not restrain themselves any more than others. I must go through the whole scene for each, and speak for her to the King. The Duchess of Burgundy has to speak to me sometimes, and she also wishes me to speak with her in private. All this makes me sometimes think, upon reflection, that mine is a very peculiar position, and must indeed be ordained by God. I see myself there in the midst of them all—this person, this old person, the sole object of their attention ! I am the one whom they address, through whom everything passes. And God gives me the grace never to see my own position on its dazzling side ; I only feel the pain of it, and it seems to me—God be thanked !—that I shall not be dazzled, that He lets me see it just as it is, and that I shall not be blinded by the greatness and favour that surround me. I look upon myself as an instrument of which God makes use to do good ; that all this influence that He permits me to have ought to be used to serve Him and to help any one I can—to bind all these princes together in union, etc. I think sometimes of the natural hatred I have to the Court ; for this is no new thing, but has always been the same. Nevertheless, if God intended me for this life, why has He given me such an aversion to it ? It must be because He willed me to live this life and yet to be saved. Madame de Montespan, on the contrary, really loved the Court, not only for those ties that kept her here, but the Court life itself. How, then, does God act ? He binds to it the one who hates it, and banishes from it the one who loves it, and apparently for the salvation of both. Ah ! how good it is to let Him do as He wills, to abandon one's self to Him, to live from day to day doing all the good that can be done ! He knows better than we do what is good for us, and most certainly He is the best guide. We have only to give ourselves up to His guidance. Now let us go on.

“When the King comes home from hunting, he comes to me. Then the door is shut, and no one comes in again. I am thus alone with him. If he has any troubles, I must share them ; his sadness, his depressed spirits. Sometimes he is subject to fits of uncontrolled weeping ; at others he is unwell. There is no conversation. Some minister perhaps comes with bad tidings, and the King is obliged to go to work. If he wishes me to be a third person at such a consultation, he calls me ; if he does not want me, I go a little apart, and sometimes say then my afternoon prayers [probably the Little Office], and pray for about half an hour. If the King wishes me to hear what is said, I cannot do anything else. Then I sometimes learn that matters are going amiss ; there comes a courier with bad news, and that grieves me, and prevents my sleeping at night.

“While the King is doing business, I take my supper ; but it does not happen to me once in two months to eat it in comfort. I know that the King is alone, or I have left him sad ; or, when M. de Chamillart is ready to leave him, the King asks me to make haste. Another day he wants to show me something. So that I am always hurried, and all I can do is to eat very quickly. I have my fruit brought in with my meat to make the greater haste, and always eat as quickly as I can. I leave Madame d’Heudicourt and Madame Dangeau at table, as they are not able to do as I do, and it sometimes makes me also ill.

“After all this, you may think how late it is. I have been up ever since six o’clock in the morning, and have not had time to breathe all day. I am worn out ; I have fits of yawning ; and, more than all the rest, I begin to feel the effects of age, and I am at last so tired that I can do no more. The King sees it, and says to me sometimes, ‘You are very tired, are you not ? You must go to bed.’ I go to bed. My women come to undress me, but I feel that the King wants to speak to me, and is waiting till they are gone away, or some minister is still waiting, and he is afraid that the women may hear. This puts him out, and me too. What is to be done ? I hurry, and I hurry so much that I feel ill ; and you must know that all my life I have hated being

hurried. When I was five years old I felt exactly the same, and it always did me an injury to be hurried, because I am naturally very quick, and thus hurry myself as far as I can ; and I also am very weak, so that I feel breathless, and suffer as I have told you. At last I am in my bed, and my women are sent away. Then the King draws near, and sits down at the head of the bed.* Can you imagine how it is with me there? I am lying down ; but I may be in need of many things, not being yet a glorified body. There is no one there whom I can ask to give me what I need. Sometimes I want some clothes to be aired, but there is no woman present. It is not that I could not have them, for the King is full of kindness, and if he thought I wanted women, he would endure ten of them ; but he has no idea that I am putting the least restraint upon myself. As he is always and everywhere master, and does whatever he wishes, he cannot imagine that any one should be different from himself, and thinks, if I have no women about me, it is because I do not want them. You know that my maxim is to spend myself and spare others. Great people are not usually like this. They never put themselves out, and they never even think that others are putting themselves out for their sake, and they are not much obliged to them, because, being used to see everything done for them, it does not strike them. Sometimes, when I have had a very severe cold, I have been nearly suffocated by keeping in the cough ; and once M. de Pontchartrain, who saw me getting scarlet, said to the King, ‘She cannot bear it any longer ; we must call some one,’ etc.

“The King stays with me till he goes to supper, and, about a

* It must be remembered, to deepen the sense of what Madame de Maintenon endured, that at Versailles her bed was in an alcove or dressing-room of her ordinary sitting-room. Within that alcove she was undressed and put to bed by her women, while the King and often one or two ministers were in the room outside.

M. Edmond Schérer, in one of four articles of great interest on Geffroy’s volumes, says that though this apartment in the palace at Versailles was unfortunately partly destroyed when the museum was arranged, there still remain the fireplace near which Louis XIV. wrote, and the large closet or dressing-room in which stood Madame de Maintenon’s bed.

quarter of an hour before then, the Dauphin and the Duke and Duchess of Burgundy come in. At ten or a quarter past ten o'clock everybody goes away. I am at last by myself, and can refresh myself according to my needs; but the anxieties and fatigue of the day often hinder me from sleeping."

I told madame several times (continued Madame de Glapion) how I felt these annoyances for her, and that I was not surprised that it had been said that she was one of the unhappiest women in the world. She replied, "And yet it might also be said, 'Is she not a happy woman? She is with the King from morning till night.' But people forget when they say so that princes and kings are like other men: that they have their pains and troubles, and that one must share these with them. And, more than this, there are a thousand things that our people [at Court] never think of, and that fall upon me. For instance, the Princess des Ursins is going away again to Spain. I am obliged to see a great deal of her, and by my attention and all that I can do for her to make her amends for the coldness of the Duchess of Burgundy, the King's dryness, and everybody's indifference towards her. I go to call upon her, I give her time with me, I listen to a thousand things I have nothing to do with; and all this that she may go away pleased with them all, able to speak well of them, especially the Duchess of Burgundy; that she may have reason to praise our Court, and speak altogether well of it. They are too careless about these things [the royal family], and it falls upon me to make up for them, and so of a thousand other things."

While we were talking, I asked madame if she were not often very impatient, and she answered, "Ah, indeed! yes, I am. Sometimes I am impatient to the very lips; but one must go on, and then it is all ordered by God. When I reflect upon my position, and feel overpowered with troubles and vexations, I think what my life might be without them. If, with all this magnificence, wealth, and ease of living, I had nothing to trouble me, could there be anything in the world more likely to destroy my soul? Such a height of greatness, combined with ease of living, leads very quickly to forgetfulness of God. I am always

lodged like the King, my furniture is magnificent, I live in abundance ; but in the midst of all this, He shows His mercy by mingling with it troubles and disagreeables which serve as a counterpoise, and make me come back to Him." . . . I said, "One thing, madame, which seems to me to make your life more painful, is that much of it appears to be of no use, as, for instance, the conversations when no apparent good is done, and the time is spent in pure loss." Madame answered, "That is true ; and not only as to the conversations which you speak of, but when I find myself at some game, when there are often cards up to this height round me. In truth, I think sometimes, 'Would any one say this is a Christian woman's room? There is nothing to be seen but splendour, nothing heard but pleasure.' Still, I comfort myself with the thought that, if it were not going on in my room, there might be thirty men with those women, and much evil might be said and done ; while now whatever passes is at least innocent, and no men are there except the princes. And then that young princess [Duchess of Burgundy] must be amused, and I think I ought not to dwell so much on what I do myself as what would be done under other circumstances."

CHAPTER XVI.

1705—1706-7.

IN 1705, the little Duke of Brittany, a most interesting and promising child, died, and Madame de Maintenon's letter to the superior of St. Cyr best describes the circumstances. The conditions of his mother's life were certainly not such as to produce healthy children. The little duke was not quite a year old.

April, 1705.

Nothing can be so touching as the sorrow of our princes, and nothing more instructive than their way of bearing it. The King has thought only of the child's happiness, considering the difficulties of salvation for those in a high position. The Duke of Burgundy feels like Abraham offering his son. The duchess in her grief is so great, so holy, so wise, so sweet, that not a word has fallen from her that every one is not delighted with. The Duke of Berry's eyes are in a state that show his deep feeling. The whole Court is in affliction. I have my own good share, but God gives me grace not to sink under it, and to will as He wills, cost what it may, though it touches just now the softest part in my heart. Good-bye, my dear children. Strengthen yourselves in faith and good works; there is much to suffer as long as we are on earth, and we greatly need to be strengthened in God. Do not be saddened by our troubles; God will not always be angry, and I trust that He will comfort us.

Madame de Maintenon wrote to Madame de Caylus from St. Cyr during that same month :—

St. Cyr, April 22, 1705.

The King has the gout, and the Duchess of Burgundy fever. I have come out here to dinner and then go back. You are reasonable, my dear niece, and I rejoice with you. We shall now have only pleasant intercourse. Send me some news of the family I recommended to you ; I have only the most comfortless recollection of them. I must not appear in the matter, but they ought not to want. I am pretty well in the midst of all our trouble. I embrace you with all my heart. How wise you are to leave everything to God without so much forecasting ! It is very useless. We do not know either what we want or what we are doing, and it seems as if God is pleased often to upset our little arrangements. Each day is enough for its own evils. You are very happy to think as you do so soon. . . .

From Marly in the same month there is a letter to the Duc de Noailles :—

Marly, April, 1705.

I have no doubt that the marshal [De Noailles] keeps you well informed as to the King's health,* and all the other news ; therefore I shall cut mine short, which is bad enough to deserve being at Bourbon† as much as anybody else. If I live much longer in the King's room I shall become paralyzed. There is not a door nor window that shuts ; one is blown upon by a wind that reminds me of American [West Indian] hurricanes. One may mention foreign parts when one has travelled. I have rheumatics in my head and all over me, and as I have only my dressing-time, I make use of it to dictate a letter to 'Nanon [Mdlle. Balbien]. I shall be well satisfied if you go on [getting better] as you have begun, for I have already had letters from

* Louis XIV. was kept at Marly from April till May by his gout.

† The duke was at Bourbon for the waters.

Mdlle. de Gralin, from my niece, and from you. Good-bye, duke. I commend to your care M. Treillh, the confessor at St. Cyr, and to Madame d'Heudicourt, a very good man, whom I like much. I beg of you to do the honours of Bourbon for him as well as you can.

Another letter to the Duc de Noailles followed in May:—

St. Cyr, May 2, 1705.

The King has the gout still, but as it is slight enough to allow of his being carried out into the gardens, he cannot make up his mind to leave Marly. On the other hand, he sees so many of his people tired of Marly that he thinks of spending a few days at Trianon. It will be as God pleases. I can only be here by snatches, so that I scarcely find any more leisure here than elsewhere. I assure you that if I do not write it is not because I do not often think of you, or that I do not see a thousand things every day that bring you to my mind. Not always by their likeness.

I am more uneasy about M. Fagon than about the King. This poor man, who is devoted to his duty, has not slept for a fortnight, and spends all his nights in watching the slightest ailment one [the King] can have. I, too, am very much worn out by the assiduous attention that draws me out of my nest* and gives me a great deal of rheumatism. Patience is a very needful virtue. Get well, my dear duke, and that will be a great comfort to me. I have already commended M. Treillh to you. Madame de Montespan is always going to start for Bourbon. They are of different values [*mérites*].

A few days afterwards Madame de Maintenon wrote to Madame de Caylus, also from Marly:—

* Madame de Maintenon suffered so much from draughts that she had had a sort of hood or nest built round her chair.

Marly, May 9, 1705.

No, my dear niece, I cannot make up my mind to the embroidery, and if you cannot send me what I ask for, send me what you can. It is not possible that I can be the only old woman in the world. Send me what you can, provided that it does not make me look ridiculous, and that it is a brown and light gown. . . . Why are you in such haste about a commission that I am not the least in a hurry about? The King gets better and better, but I think we shall still be here a week longer. I am often suffering, but always about.

The following, from St. Cyr to Madame de Dangeau, gives a curious glimpse of the perfectly Eastern fashion in which all classes of marriages were then arranged :—

St. Cyr, June 18, 1705.

I have written to the Dean of Chartres for dispensation of banns, for our adviser affirms that what we ask is according to rule. Without some such intimation, I should have doubted if our wedding could have been so speedy. The bride* is solely occupied with the lack of headgear; I have assured her that she can be married in a cap. I have given her a beautiful black damask, and an apron so splendid that it suits her far better than it does me. La Ferté tells me that the hunchback is very kind, and that he has beautiful teeth. Congratulate yourself upon the success of this good work; I am giving nothing that costs me as much as the delay of my pleasure in seeing you, but we are going to Trianon and thence to Meudon. I ought to go to Paris on St. John's Day to see my Capuchiness,† but I cannot make up my mind to take that journey without you, madame, and as you are away now on my account, the least I can do is to wait for you. My God, madame, what joy there is in doing good! The whole

* A young girl in Madame de Maintenon's service whom she found out to be of "gentle" birth, and married her to a hunchbacked gentleman, M. des Fertons. Madame de Dangeau undertook to make all the arrangements.

† Mdlle. de Montalembert, one of the girls at St. Cyr, who had gone to the Capucines.

of Versailles could not give me as much as I feel in settling in life a poor young lady who would have been in the street when I die. I am sure you will be delighted at this wedding, and that you will find M. des Fertons very good company. But as you know better than anybody how to mingle wisdom with gaiety, be sure to give plenty of advice to Agnes, who will be an excellent housekeeper, but has very little sense. You see, madame, that I do not know what I am writing, and I am interrupted every moment about this girl, who is very much astonished at her own sudden departure. Do not get knocked up at the wedding. I wanted to write you a volume, but everything has had to be done by letters. I had to send for gloves, ribbon, my smartest hood ; I have taken quassia ; Madame de Chailly wishes to come in to see me ; I must send Mdle. de Mérinville away. I really want rest, and I should like to say my prayers. They expect me early at Trianon, and here is a letter from Versailles, which must be answered. And in the midst of all this I am expected to be perfectly calm ! The worst of it now is that the bride must have some pistoles [ten-franc pieces] which I am just going to give her.

About the same year Madame de Maintenon enlarged her interests and increased her already more than voluminous correspondence by undertaking to send an abbess and several companions to the relaxed and decayed abbey of Gomerfontaine. The abbess chosen was Madame de Viefville, a relation of the Cardinal-Archbishop de Noailles, who had been educated at St. Cyr. St. Simon, whose keen and exquisitely barbed tongue was always more waspish than usual where Madame de Maintenon was concerned, declares that "she thought herself the universal abbess ; it was her favourite occupation ;" and that this idea led her into "a sea of frivolous, delusive, wearisome, sham occupations, an infinity of letters and answers, the direction of chosen souls, and all sorts of childishness."

For, in truth, Madame de Maintenon's steadily increasing and enduring influence with the King and at Court was a continual thorn in St. Simon's side. So keen an insight as his, so consummate a penetration into character, could not, however, fail to strike at times through the weak joints of even the finest coat of mail, and there is no doubt that, in spite of the difficulties she had involved the house at St. Cyr in with Madame Guyon, Madame de Maintenon was not yet cured of her keen relish for spiritual direction. Old as she now was, and sensitively feeling the infirmities of her age, she engaged in the business of reviving and reforming Gomerfontaine with all her ancient energy. There actually remain in manuscript at Versailles ninety long letters from her to the abbess, Madame de Viefville, besides others to those of her companions who went from St. Cyr to help in this most admirable work. In these letters Madame de Maintenon retraces the whole ground of the rules and instructions for teaching at St. Cyr, and, besides carefully pointing out the plan and scope of education for girls, gives the most detailed and practical spiritual counsel to the nuns.

M. Geffroy gives the date of 1705 to some pretty little notes to Madame de Dangeau :—

I am going to St. Cyr, where I shall have business till four o'clock ; after that time, madame, I am at your service. Come alone, or come with others ; the garden, the bees, the little girls, will all be for you. Either driving, or picquet at Trianon, will be good in your company.

Will Mesdames the Marchionesses de Dangeau, D'Heudicourt, and Montgon [Madame d'Heudicourt's daughter] dine together to-morrow wherever they please, so as to start at one o'clock for

St. Cyr, go to the blue class-room, and see "Esther" acted ; not laugh at several of the ugly faces of actors and singers, then say their prayers and go on to Marly ? My coach, which has nothing else to do, will await their orders, and they can send it back to St. Cyr. They could bring me six bottles of hippocras for the actresses, which M. Léger will give them. If all this does not suit them we can put it off to another day. Good-bye, my children ; my head is splitting.

What is our sweet princess [Duchess of Burgundy] doing ? Do you think I would not as soon be with her as behind M. de Pontchartrain's back ? * Send me word, madame, at least how she is, and leave nothing undone to comfort her.

Madame de Maintenon was obliged to turn from these snatched moments of rest, with the bees and the little girls at St. Cyr, to the thankless task of trying once more to soften the Archbishop of Paris.

Marly, January 5, 1706.

I have not answered the letter sooner you did me the honour to write, monseigneur, because I wished to speak about it to the King. He assures me that the Jesuits wish for peace, and that they promise exemplary chastisement to any of their body who shall write the least thing against you. First, then, we must ascertain the facts ; after that we shall see what they do. Until then, monseigneur, war must not be declared against them. I am quite of your mind when you prefer open war to civilities which do not hinder secret complaints. It is the greatest annoyance on all sides that everybody is interfering with writing upon the subject, but we must get used to hearing all sorts of contradictions. I am in constant intercourse with the negotiator [Abbé Testu], but though we are both old enough to speak seriously, we feel it difficult [sometimes] not to fall into the tone of the Hôtels de Richelieu

* When the King held council in her room, Madame de Maintenon sat a little apart, spinning.

and d'Albret. But you know, monseigneur, that the business he has undertaken is not indifferent to me. I have many reasons for wishing for a sincere reconciliation. It seems to me that this affects the glory of God, and that irreligious people are enchanted to see holy men differing to the extent of breaking up their old friendships. I am breathing peace on all sides, though I have very little time to enjoy it. I had not hoped that you could come to Versailles so soon, and I fear that you are never much inclined to do so. It should be enough for you to hold on your way firmly and with dignity. I reckon on the honour of seeing you, then, monseigneur, to-morrow week, and I assure you I shall be delighted.

Madame de Maintenon wrote next two letters to the Duc de Noailles. Extracts only are given.

St. Cyr, February 22, 1706.

In less than an hour I had the news of your second daughter and your entry into Catalonia [the duke had gone to Spain in 1705, and was commanding in Catalonia]. I was interested in both events. I should have liked you to have a boy, but, thanks be to God, you will find in Him and in yourself cause of consolation. Yes, certainly, I have seen the particulars of what you have done, and heard with joy what the King has told me in private as to your conduct. May God bless these happy beginnings! It is impossible that they should not make a happy change in the affairs of Spain. So you are now going to besiege Barcelona. If you succeed, could we not hope for peace?

I am very glad the Duke of Berwick* is going to Spain, and I hope that he will do well there, but I fear he is very weak. . . . The Princess des Ursins scolded me a little because I commended you to her, and makes out that she was in her right in commending you to me. The maréchale [the duke's mother] brought Mdlle. de Noailles [his eldest girl] to see me; she is the prettiest plain child that could ever be seen. She did not act all the

* A natural son of our King James II., and a brave and good soldier.

pieces she knew ; her attention was taken up with a little Moses that she saw in the tapestry. . . . I went yesterday to see your wife, who is very unwell, but of whom the *maréchale* takes great care. I cannot get well ; I catch a fresh cold every day, because of the constant change of dwelling and because I am always made to talk. People go from one extreme to the other, either believing that I am in my agony or in perfect health. I am really more or less convalescent.

Many things have taken place about the embassy to Rome. The Duc de St. Simon * has been proposed, and then M. [the Duc] d'Antin. The King inclined to the last, but heard from responsible people that there were two powerful parties interested in these gentlemen ; that the Jesuits wished for the Duc de St. Simon, and the Jansenists for M. d'Antin, and that Madame de Montespan was at the head of the latter clique. I own that I was astonished to hear of M. d'Antin being accused of Jansenism ; but, however, all this disturbance has occasioned delay, and in the meanwhile Abbé de la Trémoille will be entrusted with the business. It is not difficult to make your court to our princess ; I see how she always esteems and regards you. She and her husband go on perfectly well together, and I should be quite pleased with her were it not for *lansquenets*. . . . I cannot yet write myself. Pray excuse my secretary's mistakes ; she does not understand all the words in this letter.† I embrace you, my dear duke ; be sure you keep well, which is all there is to wish for you just now. . . .

April 3, 1706.

Cardinal de Noailles and I fall out every day more and more. He would like to make me answerable for the annoyances other people bring upon him, and he behaves so unjustly to one of my friends [the Bishop of Chartres] that I should be disgusted at such conduct to my footman.‡ I am fated to die of bishops, for

* The celebrated author of the "Memoirs."

† "Jansénistes" was spelt "Jean Sénistes."—Geffroy.

‡ *S'il les fesoit à mon laquais.*

you know what Monseigneur de Cambrai [Fénelon] made me suffer. It is much worse to be wrong with one's archbishop. . . .

In the same month, two letters to Madame de Caylus revert amusingly to the question of her own and other people's gowns. The English refugees friendly to the Stuarts were in great distress.

Marly, April, 1706.

The little that I can do in charity for the English women in the Chant d'Alouette [Quartier St. Marcel] has been done through M. Vacherot, which I thought you knew. I beg of you, my dear niece, to send them twenty louis, for I know they are in great want. Do not make a mistake, for there are several poor English convents in Paris. These are in the Chant or Champ de l'Alouette. I shall be glad to know which of these it is.

The price of my stuff frightens me so much that I do not think I shall ever make up my mind to put it on my old body. Is it not a great pity that the Chevalier d'Heudicourt should have died before I could give the purple gown to Madame d'Heudicourt? * She would have liked it better than the mourning she must now put on, but which will soon be brightened up by some apron. She has not been afraid of him. . . . †

St. Cyr, April 25, 1706.

The battle won in Italy [Calcinato, Duc de Vendôme] determined me to put on my gown. If they take Barcelona, I shall dress in green, and if the archduke is taken prisoner, in rose-colour. I wish I could have you here just now, for I am just in the mood for enjoyment. Go on with the monthly payments to

* Madame d'Heudicourt, related to Marshal d'Albret, was very beautiful. When brought out by the Maréchale d'Albret, the King was so struck with her that he hesitated between making advances to her or to Mdle. de la Vallière. Seeing this, the maréchale suddenly carried her away from Versailles. Some years afterwards she used to speak of this flight to the King, and even, says St. Simon, spitefully, to let him see how she regretted it.

† Madame d'Heudicourt was afraid of seeing the spirits of the dead she knew.—Geffroy.

the poor light-horseman's wife, just as if you had given nothing. I send you the nine hundred and eighty-nine francs; not to prevent your coming, but because I am afraid you may be in want of money.

Give a louis to each of the young ladies at Conflans to spend and enjoy as she likes. Good-bye, my dear niece; I am very well.

The next letter was written after the Duc de Noailles had been very ill:—

St. Cyr, April 28, 1706.

You have given me a great fright, my dear duke! Still I have always had hopes from the warm climate, and I see that God has preserved you from greater danger by this very illness. I was alarmed only by seeing how the Maréchale de Noailles was struck down; for she has been as much and truly stricken and broken down now as you have seen her calm during your past illnesses. It was a great joy yesterday, to all who care for you, to know that you were out of danger, and even to be set at rest as to your good looks, of which it seems M. Rouvart [his doctor] thinks a great deal.

I beg of you, monsieur, to thank him much for managing you so well. He has made many good people very glad. This morning I saw a holy cardinal who was much moved. There have been many prayers for you; but I am more afraid lest you should get well too soon, and I was not sorry to see by your letter that your head is still weak. Do not get well till Barcelona is taken. . . .

It will be remembered that a very great lady, a former friend and contemporary of Madame de Maintenon in the *salons* de Richelieu and d'Albret, Princess des Ursins, had gone with the young Queen of Spain to Madrid; that she had there fallen out with Cardinal d'Estrées and even with the courtly Duc de Gramont, and had been recalled to

France. Madame de Maintenon had been charged with the duty of rebuking and instructing the princess, and it was probably through her influence that she was restored to favour, and was allowed to return with flying colours to Madrid. A number of interesting letters then passed between the two ladies, which must be omitted for want of room.

CHAPTER XVII.

1707.

EARLY in 1707 there was a meeting between Madame de Maintenon and four bishops at St. Cyr, to consult on measures for opposing the progress Jansenism was making, and the former afterwards had a conversation with Madame de Glapion about that and the royal family.

February, 1707.

I felt saddened and my mind was already full of sorrowful ideas (said Madame de Maintenon), when, on reaching Versailles and my own room, to add to everything else I had the discomfort of being present at a conversation between the King and the Dauphin which gave me extreme pain. I spend my life in trying to bring them together, and to do away with everything that might lead to misunderstanding between them, and I see them always ready to fall out for a trifle. Monseigneur [the Dauphin] wishes to give a public ball to which all sorts of people should be asked; he is absolutely determined upon it, and that the Duchess of Burgundy should be there. The King, with charming gentleness, objected to this, representing to him that if he wished the Duchess of Burgundy to be present, it would not be proper for all sorts of men and women to be there too. She, on her side, did not see the least impropriety, and is as ready to dance with an actor as with a prince of the blood. I cannot tell you what this little dispute made me suffer, and what a night I had afterwards. I reproach myself for my excessive sensibility;

but, on the other hand, it seems to me that I have not been wrong, and that God desires, for instance, that I should tremble at the idea of losing the faith, that I should desire the union of the royal family, and that I should dread—with a King of seventy and a Dauphin of six and forty—anything that could put them at issue, and add a civil war to the one now general. As to the King's gentleness, you could never believe how far he carries it, and I am more free in telling him when he does wrong than I am with a thousand other people. Some days ago, for instance, when there arose something important, I said to him frankly, "You have not done well, Sire, in that ; you have been very wrong." He took this admirably, even humbly, from me. The next day, when it was necessary to speak of what had been so ill done, I wanted to let it pass quietly by, saying, "That is past, Sire ; we must not think of it again." He replied, "Do not make excuses for me, madame ; I was very wrong." Am I not right in saying that he is humble ? He has no opinion of himself ; he never thinks that he is necessary ; he is persuaded that some one else would do as well as himself, and even in many things would do better. He never ascribes to himself any of the wonderful things done in his reign ; he looks upon them as the providential dealings of God with him ; he does not feel as much pride in a year as I do in one day.

In the following month, Madame de Maintenon wrote a short letter to Princess des Ursins. The Langlée of whom she speaks was the son of one of Queen Anne of Austria's maids, of whom St. Simon thus speaks : "Complaisant to everybody, always ready to lend money, he was to be found at all the expeditions, parties, and festivities of the day. He had made himself so completely master of fashion, taste, and the best way of entertainment, that, beginning with the princes and princesses of the blood, no one gave any parties without his direction, nor was there

a house built or bought without his having the management of the bargain, the decorations, and the furniture." He had been great friends with Madame de Montespan, for whom he had designed a very famous gown, worked and embroidered all over in gold.

Marly, March 5, 1707.

M. Langlée is sending you the account, madame, of what he has already done towards executing your orders. He is alarmed at the cost, on account of the great size of the Queen's room, and would propose that you should save in tapestry by making use of your pictures. Think that what you wish him to do, and the baby-clothes Madame de Beauvillier will provide for you, will cost fifty thousand crowns. It is nothing as regards the Queen and the Prince of Asturias, but it is a good deal for the state of affairs.

Nothing can be finer, madame, than your description of the ceremony that has taken place at Madrid.* I seem to have seen it, and I think nothing could be pleasanter in the spectacle than that young, brilliant queen, who was both the greatest personage and the finest adornment there. The *camarera mayor* [Princess des Ursins] did not spoil the effect, and I think that for the time, at least, she was content, as the fatigue was not so great as to spoil the pleasure. . . .

In the same month, another letter was written to Princess des Ursins :—

St. Cyr, March 27, 1707.

Marshal de Noailles is rather better. His son left yesterday to our great regret; for he is good in all ways, and his absence

* The Queen had gone to the shrine of Our Lady of Atocha, as is customary with the queens of Spain, to return thanks for the expectation of a child. "She was in one chair," wrote Princess des Ursins, "and I was in another, and the ladies of honour in a coach. All the streets were dressed with beautiful tapestry, and at intervals silver ornaments, mirrors, and pictures were fastened to crimson damask. . . . Crowds of people sang the praises of the King and Queen, some weeping for joy, and praying that their Majesties might have fifty children, etc., etc."—Geffroy.

leaves a blank. It will comfort me if he is useful to our kings. His good-will is unlimited ; he is a good man who loves goodness for itself, who puts his heart into what he does, and is disinterested. They say that I want to make him a general, but neither he nor I think of it ; and I flatter myself, madame, that you would answer for my wishing him rather to serve usefully as a captain, than to be a useless general. I am certain that he would not gainsay me.

You will hear from all sides by this day's post that a party from Courtray, made up of more than twenty officers commanded by a colonel, had laid a plan to seize one of our princes who are always outside [the walls], and do not like to be attended by great suites. They lay in wait for the opportunity near Versailles, and on the eve of Notre Dame [Annunciation], about seven o'clock, they seized the first equerry [de Beringhen], and carried him away without seizing anything or hurting his people. They thought, apparently, by the liveries that they had one of our princes. Couriers were despatched in all directions, and they were caught at Ham. The first equerry sent word to his wife that the gentlemen had behaved so well to him that he was going to bring them back with him. . . . You will believe, madame, that the idea of seeing one of our princes carried off has put the French into something of a commotion. I had a feverish attack half an hour after hearing the news. The Duchess of Burgundy had a shivering fit for four and twenty hours, for she is very sensitive, tender, and timid. She told us yesterday, however, with her charming simplicity, that she should rather like to be carried away herself, to see what everybody would say and do.

Princess des Ursins wrote a long account to Madame de Maintenon of the social condition of the Spanish ladies at that time, which abundantly proves the extraordinary social superiority of France to the rest of Europe, England not excepted, though on very different grounds. It seems almost incredible that such women could exist in the same century with Madame de Sévigné, Madame de Maintenon,

Madame de Caylus, and a crowd of other intellectual ladies of the time, whose names are so well known.

These ladies (says the princess) cannot appear at the palace before five o'clock. They usually get up at eleven or twelve, dine at two or three, and then take their *siesta*. When they come into the Queen's room, after kneeling to kiss her hand, they take low seats (the wives of the grandees on cushions, and the others on the floor). If her Majesty and I do not keep up the conversation with real effort, it would quite come to an end. We ask if there are none among them who dance, who sing, who play upon some instrument, who like to go out walking, or who are fond of cards. They answer, "No." . . . What they really can do wonderfully well is to ask favours for themselves, their friends, and their servants. . . . Some of them wear rosaries round their necks, *Agnus** upon their shoulders, and hold little crosses, relics, and chaplets in their hands. These customs, madame, may have their merits, but it must be admitted that they are not amusing.

St. Cyr, April 10, 1707.

The description you give me of the Spanish ladies is not pleasant, madame, although it is most pleasantly given. It makes me exclaim afresh that the Queen is happy in having you with her. I own that I cannot pity her as to society, when I think what [resource] she finds in you. The rest is easy to bear when it is made up in private with one like yourself. I know more unhappy people. . . . The Comtesse de Gramont,† since her

* *Agnus Dei* are commonly worn by pious Catholics (not as ornaments, or visibly) out of devotion to our Lord as the Lamb of God. They are waxen medallions containing some martyrs' dust from the Catacombs, and are blessed by the Pope every year.

† The Comtesse de Gramont was the sister of Count Anthony Hamilton of witty memory. She was educated at Port Royal, and kept up a continual correspondence with Fénelon. She never broke off relations with Port Royal, in spite of which her charm of manner and conversation were so great that the King never showed displeasure at her Jansenistic intimacies, and affected her society so much that St. Simon accuses Madame de Maintenon of being jealous of her (Geffroy).

slight apoplexy, has sunk into a state of depression, a dread of death, and constant shedding of tears. We see nothing of her superior mind and English courage. She is altogether weak. Her husband's death afflicts her ; she thinks herself forsaken, and nothing can be more changed than she is since her attack. . . Our King is calm, firm, equable, gentle, and exactly the same as when you left. He is very well, he occupies himself in the same ways, and there is nothing to show that events have taken place which give him pain. It is astonishing, and I am always surprised at it.

Our princess [Burgundy] makes strenuous efforts to amuse herself, and only succeeds in bewildering and tiring herself out. Yesterday she went to dine at Meudon with four and twenty ladies ; afterwards they were to go to the fair and to see some very famous rope-dancers, then go back to supper at Meudon, and no doubt would play cards till daylight. She will have come home this morning either ill, or at least very serious, as she always is after her dissipations.

Our prince [Bretagne] grows very pretty, and I wish the Queen one like him. She will occupy herself then more than her sister does, and she will do well. Still, these babies are very tiresome ; they ought, at least, to have some intelligence. . . .

Another letter to Princess des Ursins quickly followed :—

St. Cyr, May 8, 1707.

It is indeed right to thank the God of battles for the one He has gained for us [Almanza]. You are quite right as to the King's joy and that of all the royal family. I cannot refrain from giving you the details. You know Marly and how I am lodged. The King was by himself in my little room, and I was just sitting down to table in my closet, through which every one passes. An officer of the guards called out at the door of the room in which the King was, "Here is M. de Chamillart." "What, himself?" answered the King, because in the natural course of things he

would not have come in person. I threw down my napkin, quite excited, and M. de Chamillart said to me, "That is good!" and came in at once, followed by M. de Lilly, whom I did not know. You may be sure, madame, that I went into the room too. Then I heard of the defeat of the enemy's army, and went back to supper in high good-humour. The Dauphin, who had either been playing cards or looking on, came in very quickly to see the King, and the Duke of Burgundy also with a billiard [cue] in his hand. Madame [of Orleans] then came, as they had hurried away to tell her that the Duke of Orleans had won a battle. I told her that he was not present [he arrived the day after the battle], at which she was very angry, and I heard that she said, "I shall hear soon that my son has hung himself!" Madame de Dangeau left the table to write to her husband, who was in Paris, and Madame d'Heudicourt went to the door of my closet to court a little rest. . . .

No one can doubt that if St. Simon's rude criticism of Princess des Ursins was not altogether untrue—that "she poked her nose into everybody's business"—she still showed real genius in her position at Madrid. In expectation of the great coming event of the Queen's confinement, when everybody was resolved beforehand that the Prince of Asturias was about to appear, Princess des Ursins had sent for twelve wet-nurses to the palace, who were to be kept and entertained there till the momentous event. The doctor and nurse had been sent from France,* but the wet nurse or nurses were to be Spanish women, and were to be chosen out of the twelve.

The princess wrote to Madame de Maintenon :—

Then the nurses were to have their supper; and, that they might get used to me, I sat down at one end of the table on a very

* Clement, the famous *accoucheur*, and Madame de la Salle, who had attended the Duchess of Burgundy.

pretty straw chair, while they sat on the carpet, after the manner of the country. Then I tasted what was served to them to see if it was too highly flavoured or too greasy, and finding it to my taste, I took advantage of it and supped with them. We drank to the health of all the royal family and the prince to be born. It was then, madame, that I watched the expression of fear or hope in the faces of all the candidates.

Madame de Maintenon was not slow to answer :—

St. Cyr, June 12, 1707.

I do not believe, madame, that any one has ever carried kindness, politeness, and regard towards our blood royal so far as you have done at your reception of the nurses for the Prince of Asturias—for I hope it will be a boy. Indeed, I wish I could have been at the festivity, for I know of few feasts that would please me more. You do everything admirably, and certainly you will find an admirer in me. . . . Madame de Caylus has been spending a few days at Versailles, and will soon come again. To-day the Duchess de Noailles is with me. . . . I admit, madame, that the women of our time are to me unbearable. Their senseless, immodest mode of dress, their snuff, their wine, their greediness, their coarseness, and their idleness are all so opposed to my tastes, and, I think, to what is right, that I cannot bear it. I like women who are modest, sensible, gay, ready either for serious or sportive talk, polished, able to rally others in a way that yet implies praise, whose hearts are good and whose conversation is amusing, and with simplicity enough to own that they have recognized this likeness, which I have drawn without intending it, but which I think is a very good one.

Another less interesting letter to Princess des Ursins quickly followed :—

St. Cyr, June 19, 1707.

. . . The Duc de Bretagne goes out every fine day. He came yesterday to Trianon in very good health. Cardinal Janson could not refrain from speaking of his pleasure the other day in seeing

in one group the King, Monseigneur [the Dauphin], the Duke of Burgundy, and the Duc de Bretagne. The Duchess of Alva was maintaining to the Maréchale de la Motte * that the Prince of Asturias would be a finer child, and did not pay her court well to our governess [of the royal children]. . . . M. d'Antin has told me about Madame de Montespan's death. He was with her during the last three days of her life.† She was as calm as heretofore she has been troubled at the approach of death, which no one ventured to speak of while she was in health. She did not say a word to any one present, nor to her son. She only said to the Father-guardian ‡ of the Capuchins, who was present, "Father, exhort me as you would any ignorant woman, as simply as you can." . . . The Duchess of Burgundy does everything she possibly can to destroy her health ; she will only believe this when she is past remedy.

Madame de Maintenon was unwearied in her watchful and loving pursuit of this imprudent, impulsive, bewitching, and irritating princess, who loved her with the warmest affection, even while wounding her to the heart by her gambling and infatuation for almost compromising pleasures. Indeed, her thirst for pleasure of any kind led her to actions which seriously displeased the King. The lady of whom Madame de Maintenon speaks as "Madame la Duchesse" was the wife of Duke Louis de Bourbon Condé, and daughter to the King by Madame de Montespan. The Duchess of Burgundy had been seen by the King, after hunting, gambling with a gay party at La Bretesche or Saint Nom-la-Bretesche, a little village between Versailles and Marly, upon which Madame de Maintenon wrote to Madame de Dangeau :—

* Governess or chief nurse to the Duke of Brittany.

† Her son. St. Simon says he was there only for a few hours.

‡ The superior.

July 16, 1707.

Madame de Vaudemont is only a pretext, madame, and I have asked you to put off your journey to Paris that you may speak to the Duchess of Burgundy. The King told me yesterday evening that he had been surprised to see the gamblers at La Bretesche. I found from that that the Duchess of Burgundy had deceived me. She told me that Madame la Duchesse had invited herself to that dinner, but I see that it was a thing arranged. The King told me that she had asked the duchess to come, and M. de Lorges was one of the first to arrive. I replied that it was natural enough that the duchess should be with her brother; but as for the gambling, I was more sorry for it than anybody.

The King said to me, "Were not a dinner, a ride on horseback, a hunt, and a collation enough for one day?" Then, after reflecting a little, he added, "I had better tell those gentlemen that they do not make their court wisely to me by gambling with the Duchess of Burgundy." I said I had always been afraid that *lansquenet* would lead her to go to places that would be bad for her, and put her in a wrong position. Then we spoke of other things; but the King came back to the subject, and said, "Should I not do well in seeing that those gentlemen are spoken to?" I replied that that way of managing it might be injurious to the Duchess of Burgundy, and that it would be better to speak to herself, and keep the matter secret. He said that he would do this to-day; and it is that you may prepare her, madame, that I have begged you to remain at home. And now we shall come to that estrangement that I have always dreaded, and sooner than I expected. The King will feel that he has displeased her by breaking up the *lansquenet*, and will be cooler towards her. I shall feel the same thing, while treating her with the respect that is her due; but I am not yet so free from human respect as to be willing for it to be supposed that I approve of such conduct. The Duchess of Burgundy will be pitied by Madame la Duchesse, which recalls to my mind the snares laid by her mother [Madame de Montespan] for the Queen and Madame de la Vallière, that

what they did might be afterwards reported to the King. If you could come to St. Cyr, madame, after having spoken [to the duchess], I shall be delighted, but after the vexatious conversation you may have, I doubt if you will be able to appear. If it is possible for you to sound the Duchess of Burgundy, you might give her my letter, that she may be ready to answer the King, and this evening you could talk to her at greater length. You can imagine, madame, what sort of night I have had. We must pray for our princess, who is drowning herself in a glass of water.

M. Geffroy, with his usual literary insight, connects with this letter and the King's conversation with Madame de Maintenon the following undated note of the Duchess of Burgundy :—

I am in despair, my dear aunt, at always doing foolish things and giving you cause to be displeased with me. I am really resolved to amend, and not to play any more at that wretched game, which is good for nothing but to injure my character and to lessen your affection, which is more precious to me than anything else. I beg of you, my dear aunt, not to speak, in case I keep to the resolution I have taken. If I once fail, I shall be delighted that the King should forbid me to play, and to try how that feeling would act [as a safeguard] against myself. I am overwhelmed by all your goodness, and by what you have sent me to finish paying my debts. I have been very sorry not to speak to you about it sooner. I am in despair at having displeased you. I have forsaken God, and He has forsaken me. I hope, with His help, which I ask with my whole heart, that I shall cure myself of all my faults.

In the midst of all her vexations, difficulties, and real sorrows, Madame de Maintenon never lost possession of that deep, inward spring of gaiety which constituted one of her chief charms. She gave Madame de Caylus a commission to buy and dress for her an expensive doll, which

was to be a present to her great-niece, the little de Noailles. Madame de Caylus, who was also full of sprightliness and wit, dressed the doll in the most exaggerated caricature of the prevailing fashion at Court, and sent it to Madame de Maintenon. She exhibited this doll with great pleasure, and though it was "a far cry," the commotion excited was echoed even at the Court of Spain. Princess des Ursins wrote that Madame de Caylus had sent her such an amusing account of the doll's dress and its consequences, that she had read it to the King and Queen, who enjoyed a hearty laugh over the letter. Madame de Maintenon wrote to Madame de Caylus :—

St. Cyr, August 21, 1707.

The doll has amused the Duchess of Burgundy, who thought it very well dressed. You will be sure, after this, that I shall not regret the expense. I have not seen Madame de Noailles yet ; I think she is in Paris. . . . To set up your health you ought to come to Versailles when we are there. Hunting, for a change, would do you a great deal of good. . . . If you see Madame de St. Géran, beg of her to add to the commissions she is so good as to undertake some flame-coloured ribbon for Jeannette's cap, which will go well with the apron and tippet.*

Adjoining the huge palace at Versailles, a building had been added on for the safe lodging of rare and specially prized wild beasts, on which account it was called "The Ménagerie." To this Ménagerie had further been added a kind of pavilion and other rooms, so as to make it a sort of pleasure-house, which Louis XIV., after his favourite fashion, richly decorated and gave to the Duchess of

* Jeannette Pincré was one of the many girls Madame de Maintenon partly adopted, and for whom she found husbands.

Burgundy. After a while, rooms both for summer and winter were built on to it, which were really sumptuously decorated by the best painters of the day—Andran, Allegrain, etc. It was fitted up merely with pretty sitting-rooms, where the duchess and her friends used to play cards and games and eat fanciful collations. There was a farm attached to the pavilion, which led the duchess to forestall Marie Antoinette in her favourite game of acting dairy-maid. The farm remains a farm still ; and those who care to do so may trace out the plan of the little château by its ruins, which once so often echoed to the bright laughter and merry games of the Savoyard princess and her companions. From this gay little house Madame de Maintenon wrote to Madame de Dangeau. The day of the month is not given.

The Ménagerie, September, 1707.

I am at the Ménagerie, to please Madame d'Heudicourt, who proposed it, . . . rather than to take my nieces to St. Cyr, and to play a little backgammon. But, madame, how different these parties are from those at which you are present ! I have not quite made out whether it is because of the pleasantness you bring to them, or to the noise you make ; but we are certainly much too quiet. We thought of making a pool to prolong the game, and I won it first, to the great displeasure of the ladies, and however glad I may have been of the money, I was a little sorry to see our pool come to an end without you. I should like to have kept it back for you, and you would have been delighted to argue out the expedients for your winning it. You would have proposed a hundred things, plans, each worse than the other, for M. de la Rochefoucauld teaches us that there never is more than one good plan. Our princess, in a religious habit, received yesterday [at St. Cyr] the Queen of England, by whom she was recognized at once. She did not cease acting the part of a Dame de St. Louis, and

waited on the Queen and the princess * during the collation ; for it was necessary to give one, which did not afford me much satisfaction. The Duchess of Burgundy tired herself very much at St. Cyr, taking part in all the offices of the house, and from there she came to join the Duke, who was waiting for her here and getting supper ready. She returned tired out to Versailles, having changed her dress four or five times. I do not know why I have undertaken to tell you a story which is as tiresome as the actors in it were tired. It would be much better worth telling to say that our prince has cut a tooth, and that Mrs. Nurse has received more than two or three hundred pistoles, with which she is very much pleased. You wrote me a wonderful letter. As I have the honour of knowing how little you are given to mystery, I read it aloud on coming back from St. Cyr, and all the party were charmed, especially M. Fagon, whose taste is not to be despised.

Good-bye, madame ; I am going to play cards again. Come back in good condition to do something on Wednesday, and believe that not having seen you now makes me happier than when I cease to see you.

* Princess Louise of England.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1707—1708.

MEANWHILE, the Queen of Spain had given birth to a son [August 25], and the much-reckoned-on Prince of Asturias was at last duly welcomed into the world. But the young Queen, not well advised in this matter also by Princess des Ursins, had insisted on his being baptized Louis, which was an offence to the Spaniards. The princess wrote to Madame de Maintenon, giving her reasons, and Madame de Maintenon replied as follows :—

Fontainebleau, October 10, 1707.

I will read your letter to the King, madame, which is all I can do. It is full of force, and, I have no doubt, full of truths also. It is true that it is very difficult to destroy certain impressions here, and in my own case I am tempted to believe that all French customs are unpleasant to Spaniards, and that nothing pertaining to etiquette should have been changed. It is difficult to count the *grandees* as nothing ; but it would not be the least difficult to me to yield to your opinion, and I wish with all my heart that everybody here was of the same mind. I do not think there were any Austrians ; but it may well be that they are too much attached to their own ways of thinking, and that their policy is treacherous.

I cannot picture to myself anything more delightful than your Queen carrying her son herself to present him to God, and I beg of Him with all my heart to bless so pious a family. This is my hope, and I cannot believe that He will forsake them. I feel

M. Amelot's grief more than I have told you.* His life and everything you have mentioned and written have given me such a regard for him that I look upon him as one of my best friends, for esteem acts with me as intercourse does with others.

I am charmed with the letter the King of Spain has done me the honour to write. . . . I cannot have the honour of answering it by this post. It will be the same thing, I think, as to the subject of Mdlle. de Séry,† for I do not know whether I can see the King before my letter goes. If he grants what you ask, madame, it will be as a very great favour to the prince, for nothing can be worse than the position that woman holds here, through her own conduct. She sustains her pretensions with such insolence as to shock everybody, and induces the person attached to her to do such foolish things as injure him more than I can say. The King has spoken several times to his nephew about her. Her going to Grenoble, and the weak way in which he shut himself up with her, destroyed all the honour he gained at Turin, where all the misery fell upon others, and not the least upon him. This creature has the impudence to establish herself in the Palais Royal, taking up her dwelling opposite the windows of the Duchess of Orleans. She has carried off a great quantity of the furniture from St. Cloud, about which Madame [Duchess of Orleans] disputed with her for a long time, and she replied with the same insolence. She is

* M. Amelot's second son had been shot while hunting near St. Denis, by Comte de Clermont, son of Comte de Tonnerre. It was given out to be an accident, but guilt must have been proved, as the Marquis de Dangeau says, "The King has pardoned Comte de Tonnerre. He is to be put into the Bastille for a year; to give ten thousand francs in alms that Cardinal de Noailles will distribute to the poor; he is never to go to any house where M. Amelot is, and if M. Amelot comes to any house where he [De Tonnerre] is, he is to leave it at once." St. Simon says De Tonnerre was half-witted—*hébété*.—Geffroy.

† The Duke of Orleans' mistress, who had started off in the most open and exaggerated publicity to Grenoble, when the duke lay there wounded at the siege of Turin. The duke had applied to Princess des Ursins to beg the title of lady-in-waiting to the Queen of Spain for Mdlle. de Séry. It was necessary to ask permission of Louis XIV.

destroying the prince's life by keeping him away from the Court, and making him spend his time in the worst possible company. Do not think, madame, that I am speaking to you like an old *dévoté*, frightened at this woman's sins; but you know perfectly well that even in wickedness itself there is a difference of manners. I do not know how the matter might be taken in Spain, but I can answer for its having a very bad effect here, both for our King and yours. His piety and the Queen's goodness ought to prevent such a scandal from being honoured, and it is very pitiable that the Duke of Orleans should ask such a reward for his services. . . .

I was interrupted at the first word that I wanted to say to the King about Mdlle. de Séry, and I assure you, madame, that I had great difficulty in making him listen to that part of your letter. I am told that if you could be on the spot to hear what is said here about that woman, you would not feel about her as you do. It is much more to be desired, madame, that you should use the influence you have with that prince to withdraw him from a connection that is doing him a great deal of harm, and that sooner or later will bring him into the utmost difficulties. Those about the Court would say exactly what I am telling you, and everybody sees with pain how so many great qualities are spoiled by conduct which cannot be approved. It is even maintained that the Duke of Orleans himself is, in the main, tired of the connection, and that it is only a mistaken generosity and kindness that make him bear the weight of it.

The King will never yield this point, madame, and you must spare him any renewed urgency, which will only make the matter worse. This is the first time that I have not thought you right. . . . The King is coming into my room, and this makes me finish my letter sooner than I should wish.

The chapter of the charming doll, dressed by Madame de Caylus, was by no means finished; and nothing more exhaustively shows the littleness of the ordinary stamp of "Court lady" of the time, than the offence this poor doll

occasioned. Madame de Maintenon wrote again about it to her niece :—

October 12, 1707.

Madame de Dangeau and Madame d'Heudicourt have written to you about the doll. I never could have believed that any of my commissions should have brought you troubles, and I thought I might be allowed to ask my niece for what I wanted to have. I had not the least idea of sending the doll into society ; but I could not refuse her to the Dauphine and the Prince de Conti, who asked for her. In the end this trifling business stirred up all the ladies, and gave rise to every sort of talk that could make people quarrel with me. People are irritated with you for having turned into ridicule ladies whom they mention by name, according to their plan of trying to incense them against you ; and they are most frankly angry with me because I have dared to attack the fashions. I beg of you not to mind this more than I do. Madame de Bouzols gave me to understand this to-day by saying that you were extremely sensitive to what is said of you ; but, my dear niece, we must always take things calmly when we are not in the wrong. Do you think I might ask you for a pattern of black moiré, with the price, without committing you with the public ? They are those wavy moirés, like the English kinds. I saw one upon Madame de Chatillon which made me envious, considering the great people about me. I have always maintained that it was not M. d'Hamilton [Count Anthony] who wrote the story of the doll ; there is too much difference between the style and his, and I have still taste enough not to make a mistake in this. We miss you very much here. Sometimes they play backgammon and picquet, and sometimes they find it very dull. I am very well. I saw Marshal d'Harcourt to-day ; he was very keen about your affairs. I embrace you, my dear niece.

Madame de Maintenon opened the next year with two letters to Princess des Ursins, from which some extracts only are given :—

St. Cyr, January 22, 1708.

. . . The amusement you speak of, madame [theatricals], is very innocent. I should have liked to introduce it at our Court, for I think these representations are more wholesome than continual card-playing and intemperate dinners. I should like just now to send you Madame de Caylus and five or six young ladies from St. Cyr ; for declamation is always kept up there, and at this moment " Esther " is being played in my anteroom. It would be very unfair to laugh at the good people who are kind enough to divert the King and Queen, and they ought to have good sense enough not to be put out by it. Would it be contrary to etiquette for the King and Queen to act themselves ? I have seen in the theatre of my room at Versailles a very pretty troupe, consisting of the Duchess of Burgundy, the Duchess de Noailles, Maréchale d'Estrées, and Mdlle. de Melun, the Duke of Orleans, the Duc de Noailles, the young Comte de Noailles, and the Duke of Berry. But the latter, I think, only acted comic parts. You will find it difficult to amuse the King of Spain, but all these things might divert the Queen ; and you only admit whom you please. That was done in my room, because there was so little space ; but it is true that in the end one gives offence to those who are not asked, and that is why I left off the plays at St. Cyr. . . .

The only subject here now is balls. There is one two days hence. The King of England [James Stuart] and the princess are coming. The Queen has the gout still. The King was to have gone to see her to-day. She does not want for visitors when the Court is at Marly. . . .

In the other letter, begun at St. Cyr, she says :—

St. Cyr, March 4, 1708.

M. de Chamillart has resigned like a man of integrity, without either contention or keeping anything for himself, with a straightforwardness that is beyond praise.

The letter ends at Versailles :—

I came back here, madame, to finish my letter, and to ask the

King's leave to tell you of the Scotch expedition, which puts me into a state of great excitement. You will, no doubt, hear all the details ; but, in a word, madame, the King of England starts on Wednesday, the 7th of this month, so as to be at Dunkirk towards the 9th, and will embark on the 10th. The King gives him six thousand men. The great Scotch lords have written several times that they will receive him. You will see, madame, that if God blesses this undertaking, it will make a great diversion, and perhaps bring about peace. If you have any holy people in Spain, set them to praying. The thing is public now, but people maintain that the enemy has not had time enough to hinder the expedition. My long sight, however, discerns them at Dunkirk ready to prevent the embarkation, or if they embark, I see them intercepting our troops before they can be landed. To-day the wind is in the north, which is the most contrary for us. Nevertheless, I am willing with all my heart that you and the Queen shall see the King of England setting sail with a south wind, which shall bring them to Edinburgh in four days ; that he shall there be received and proclaimed King of Scotland ; that Queen Anne shall be obliged to recall her troops, and that we shall take advantage of the recall. I am quite willing, also, that the fleet shall take Marlborough prisoner in passing, as he is going to Holland for a fortnight.

I went yesterday to St. Germain. The Queen [Mary Beatrice of England] is in a pitiable condition. She has gout, fever, and a severe cold, and is in a state of agitation that you can imagine. She is enchanted at this ray of hope, and dreads the dangers which her son the King will run. He is full of joy at starting. The princess has the measles, and knows nothing as yet. The King and Monseigneur [the Dauphin] go there to-morrow, and our princess [Burgundy] on Tuesday. It will be a great thing if it succeeds, and I am thinking of it day and night.

Not much more than a month elapsed before this day-dream, like so many others of the poor widowed Queen of James II., had also vanished among the things that might

have been, and again Madame de Maintenon wrote to Princess des Ursins :—

St. Cyr, April 22, 1708.

. . . Your grief at the Scotch news adds to my own. I had at first hoped to bear it very patiently, and I inwardly admired my own courage ; but the next day the fever began again, and rose in proportion to what caused it, so that M. Fagon distinguished it from the others I had had, and called it the Scottish fever. It lasted ten days. Just now there is a good interval, which will last while God wills, and it may perhaps end this evening after a conversation I shall have with the Queen of England, who is to come to supper at Marly, with her son the King. I have not seen her since her new affliction, not having been in a state to go to St. Germain. Never did any expedition meet with such approbation as that one. It was only (between you and me) the King who had always a bad opinion of it, but he gave in to the public voice, for from the Dauphin down to the lowest errand-boy at Court and the fishwomen of La Halle, everybody was for going to Scotland. But, madame, God did not will it. He sent the measles to the King of England, which kept him ten days at Dunkirk ; the wind changed an hour after they had set sail, and kept him four and twenty hours at Ostend ; they blundered the entry into the river of Edinburgh [Firth of Forth], so that everything combined to bring our enemy there at the same time as ourselves. The skill and good fortune of the Chevalier de Forbin saved our fleet ; he sailed to windward of the enemy, and we only lost one ship. They thought three small vessels were lost, but yesterday they heard that they are at Brest, and have brought back the remainder to the troops. The English troops which had passed by have not returned, and, contrary to my usual habit, I flatter myself that there is a stir in Scotland, and that the fright we have given the English has made some little diversion [in affairs].

I am delighted, madame, at what you say of your health. It must have a good foundation when you can be cured by fasting as

rigorous as that of La Trappe. This example will never be followed at our Court, and the King will be very sorry for you when I tell him how you have been living. I believe, madame, that you must have eaten largely of spinach, but I wish you could have had good butter, and to do that you have only to shake the day's cream in a bottle. It is true that you get only a little at a time, and those who sell it always want a great deal. They tell you it is only just shaken out, and they may speak truly ; but the cream is several days old, which makes the butter bad. As I am very fond of butter, I have studied this matter thoroughly. . . .

There is then another letter to Princess des Ursins :—

St. Cyr, June 3, 1708.

. . . We have had a great scene at Marly. Madame de Roquelaure sent to beg me to let her into my room by a back door ; and I found her all in tears, saying that she had come to ask justice of the King for the carrying away of her daughter by Prince de Léon.* These are the facts. The marriage was arranged between this prince and Mdlle. de Roquelaure, and after it was negotiated it was broken off because the Duc de Rohan would not give his son enough [to settle]. However, as it had been a very long negotiation, the two parties met and made a mutual promise of marriage. The young lady was in a convent of la Croix, Faubourg St. Antoine, with her governess, who had orders never to let her go out except with Madame de Viefville. The Prince de Léon had the arms and livery of that lady put upon a coach, and [it was sent] to ask for Mdlle. de Roquelaure to take her to her mother, who was with Madame de Viefville. She got into the coach with her governess, who, perceiving that they were not taking the right road, began to call out, but they stopped her mouth with a handkerchief. They then took up Prince de Léon, and all went together to a little country house belonging to the Duc de Lorges. A priest said Mass there and married them. They [the bride and bridegroom] were shut up together for four

* The eldest son of the Duc de Rohan-Chabot,

hours, and Mdle. de Roquelaure was then taken back to the convent with her governess. This is what the Prince de Léon wrote to the Duc d'Aumont, "I beg of you, monsieur, to tell Madame de Roquelaure that I have married her daughter, and taken back Princess de Léon to her convent, where I hope she will not remain long." You know, madame, what courtiers' charity is. This adventure pleased them all very much. The Duchess of Burgundy was beside herself about it, declaring that she loved events. This girl is about five and twenty, tired to death of being in convents. They say she is very clever, but hump-backed and very ugly. They say that M. de Roquelaure wishes to prosecute with the utmost rigour, but that it cannot be treated either as abduction or rape. I hope after all the disturbance everybody will calm down, and I think the best plan would be to marry them with the usual forms. . . . The Duke of Burgundy is making a very good beginning [with the army in Flanders]. He makes himself beloved by the officers, and is feared when discipline is relaxed. He enters into all the details, and asks for advice from all sides. I am not telling you this as flattery, for I hear it from those who would say the contrary if he deserved it. The Duke of Berry seems now to like his present life. . . . I must say a word about the Chevalier de Saint George,* with whom everybody seems much pleased, and who perfectly fills his position. Though I am much pleased with myself, madame, when I agree with you and M. Bedmar and your genius, I can well understand that the King of England makes a better figure in the army than if he were at the Dunkirk campaign. . . .

In her next letter to Princess des Ursins Madame de Maintenon says:—

July, 1708.

M. and Madame de Rohan make fresh cavils every day about the conclusion of the marriage [of their daughter and Prince de

* James Stuart of England took this name when he went to serve in the French army in Flanders.

Léon], but the King has sent them word that he is determined it shall be completed.

Whenever Madame de Maintenon was at Fontainebleau she filled up the time she used to spend at St. Cyr in going to see poor people in the hamlets and villages near. Mdlle. d'Aumale, her loving and faithful secretary, gives a full account of one of these days. She and Madame de Dangeau were her usual companions.

At half-past seven she went to Mass; at half-past eight she began her mission, first to Avon, to the boys' school, where she taught for nearly an hour; then to the girls', for quite as long. When she speaks of God to these peasants, you see a great gladness in her face, and a very strong wish to make them know Him. At eleven o'clock she went away to the lodges to hear another Mass, and there she dined very moderately. At three o'clock she went to St. Aubin, a hamlet belonging to Avon; there she gave help to four or five families. Thence to Valoin, where she went into six poor peasants' houses, each worse than the other. To some she gave money for corn; to others for bread, for clothes for their children, and to pay their dues. In the last one she gave a good deal of linen to a poor woman. Her husband was rather an evil-liver, but she half converted him, and God and she herself will finish the work. He had no respect for the *curé*, nor would he obey him, but she softened him very much. She came home about seven o'clock, very tired, but well in health.

This account of Mdlle. d'Aumale will throw its due light on the following little note to Madame de Dangeau:—

Fontainebleau, August, 1708.

The Duchess of Burgundy wishes to dine with us, and also that the dinner should be in the Duchess de Noailles' rooms. After dinner she will go to play cards with Monseigneur, and if you like, madame, we will go and preach at Avon. Our people will

come so late that we shall be able to return to recreation at about six o'clock. If this plan suits you, we will carry it out ; but if you wish to throw it over, I am ready for whatever you command, and I will do my own will to-morrow.

During the following month (September, 1708), Madame de Maintenon had another very interesting talk with Madame de Glapion, who recorded the conversation in her usual way, as follows in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIX.

1708.

September, 1708.

THE Duchess of Burgundy having come to St. Cyr to see Madame de Maintenon, began by saying to her, "My heart is very heavy, my dear aunt; I am afraid of being troublesome, but I should like to shed tears with you." She did so in truth; and Madame de Maintenon wept with her, and then strove to comfort her. Madame de Glapion told her the next day that she was grieved for her, for it was so sad to be obliged to share everybody's sorrows, and showed her the verse of the "Imitation" which she was just then reading—"What shall I do, O my God, amid so many afflictions that wound my heart, if Thou dost not deign to strengthen me with Thy Word?" "What, indeed, should I do," said Madame de Maintenon, "if all my resource were not in God? For I find myself almost always in difficulties, without knowing what side to take, which happened to me the other day. The King had heard a piece of bad news, which he told me the same evening, about half an hour before he left me. The Duchess of Burgundy, who was very sorry for the news, was present also. At the same time, a man came to beg me to ask the King to do something which it was not right for him to do at all, and which yet he could not refuse without driving the man to desperation, and without putting himself, too, to extreme pain, as he might stand in need of that man. I had to tell the King about it, and I knew how puzzled I should be myself. I did not know which side to take, and I said to our Lord, 'Lord, help me, for I do not know what to do,

nor how to do it !' " Madame de Glapion said that she was to be pitied for not being able to take advice of any one about it. "Thank God," said Madame de Maintenon, "I have a sensible director, who helps me, as it were, in a general way to decide what I ought to do, and when he has once told me what I can do with a safe conscience, or what I should avoid doing, I keep to what he has laid down ; otherwise I could not live, and I should be in endless suffering." "You have, it seems to me," said Madame de Glapion, "a great liberty [of conscience] with God." "That is true," she replied, "and I think one is allowed to have it when one feels that one belongs truly to Him ; and I hope that is my state, for I desire truly the glory of God, the salvation of those to whom I am bound, and my own. Thanks be to His goodness, I have no passions ; that is, I do not love any one so far as to do anything to displease God. I have no hatreds, no desire for vengeance, no special interest, no ambition ; I do not crave anything for myself. I think it is rather the good of the thing itself than inclination which decides me to do good to others." "You owe much to God," said Madame de Glapion, "for there are few people who could so bear witness to themselves." "And therefore, my daughter," she replied, "I never cease thanking Him and giving praise for the singular protection He gives me in the midst of difficulties ; for on the one hand I may say that there are exceeding greatness and favour, and on the other an excess of trouble and sorrow ; for God only knows how I feel the troubles of the King, the princes, and the country." "In that you are more to be pitied than they, madame," said Madame de Glapion, "for in general great people do not feel things much." "That is," she answered, "because I am not a great person. I am only raised ; but God, Who has ordered all states, and mine specially, ordains that it shall stand me in stead of all the penances and austerities that I could perform. I have always in my mind Spain nearly lost, peace further and further off, the misery of the country that I hear of on all sides, and a thousand people who suffer before my eyes and that I cannot help. In

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regard to piety, I think of the present excesses, drinking, greediness, excessive luxury of living, etc ; and in regard to religion [the faith] I see the possible dangers. I do not know whether I should influence the King to push matters [with severity] in this respect, or whether to moderate him ; for who knows whether too much severity will not embitter men's minds, raise up revolt, or even bring about a schism ? On the other hand, who can tell whether God makes use of this human prudence and the policy of man when the Church is in question ? All this troubles me inconceivably. I say to myself, 'Who will assure me that the King will not make himself answerable for all that, and for all the evil consequences that may befall ? I am seized with exceeding dread as to his salvation when I think what his obligations are ; for we are bound to do all the good that God asks of us, and shall have an account to give of all the harm we could have prevented. How can I tell in what way He will judge it all ? In truth, my head seems at times to grow giddy, and I think, if my body should be opened after my death, my heart will be found all twisted and dried up like that of M. de Louvois.' *

"I do not say these things to grieve you, my dear daughter ; on the contrary, to make you love your own state more and more, and that you may the more appreciate the sweetness, peace, and security of it." Then, as she went out of her room to pray [in the chapel], she said, "I do not know how it is that one recovers in prayer from all the evils I suffer from. I find nothing does so much good ; it rests and strengthens both the heart and mind at the same time. The presence of God is also a great relief in suffering, and it seems to me that it becomes almost natural, and that everything about us recalls it unceasingly ; sorrow, that we may be comforted by Him ; joy, because we have to thank Him and beg of Him not to forsake us. The praise of men recalls it, because we must ask to be delivered from the vanity and weakness of yielding to it ; contradictions recall it, that we may beg to make

* Louvois died quite suddenly, of pulmonary apoplexy, and Madame de Maintenon was calumniated to the extent of being accused of having poisoned him.

a holy use of them and not fall. In a word, I find that every hour, every moment, we are meeting with occasions which realize for us God's presence, and lead us to that holy intercourse with Him which softens all the bitterness so plentifully scattered through life, and keeps us from the falls to which we are always exposed."

There is a letter to the Duc de Noailles of the same month, from which an extract must be given :—

St. Cyr, September 10, 1708.

. . . Our King is the only person who always keeps himself in the same equableness of mind, temper, and occupations. Our sweet princess is only too sweet, and I begin to think she is too good. You would be delighted with her way of going on, and I wish she had some companions like you ; for few of those about her are capable of valuing what she feels, and I often hear her praised very unreasonably. These are subjects for conversation for this winter, if you still find me here. I still go on in spite of my extreme weakness of body and mind, or, to speak more justly—for I cannot speak to you in all sorts of languages—God supports me, and will support me as long as it pleases Him to make me suffer. You know my crosses, and they are imperceptible to others, but that does not signify ; the really important thing is to bear them well. I am not satisfied about your father's health. I love him truly, and I know what you will suffer when you lose him. He sleeps a good deal, and has no appetite. People laugh at me for being alarmed about him, and I hope they may laugh for a long time. . . .

Early in the next month Marshal de Noailles died, and Madame de Maintenon again wrote to his son :—

St. Cyr, October 7, 1708.

You are seldom out of my mind, my dear duke, and you have so clearly showed me what your affection for your father was, that your sorrow is always present to me. You have to bear it alone and in sickness, but religion, courage, and your reason furnish

you with resources. It is true that [even with these] one scarcely suffers the less. Religion leads us to accept the penalty, courage sustains the exterior, and right reason furnishes some feeble reflection to oppose to our feelings. We must agree, too, that it is exceedingly reasonable to shed tears for a father, especially such a father as yours. I feel it more than I can tell you. The King gives me hopes of seeing you after All Saints. Your family needs you very much to give it shape again. Our Cardinal has felt deeply, and does his best to sustain the others. . . .”

There was in December a magnificent requiem for Marshal de Noailles at Notre Dame, at which nearly all the Court nobles and ladies were present. Madame de Maintenon was too weak to venture, but she wrote to his son :—

Versailles, December 3, 1708.

I have never felt the burthen of old age so much as to-day, when it has prevented my rendering Marshal de Noailles and all his family a duty which touched my heart much more than my sense of what was owing to them. Pray represent my sorrow for this to the Cardinal and the maréchale, my dear duke, and be surety for me that I should never willingly fail in anything due to them. I know of nothing new, and we have nothing good to look for. When you come back, I hope to have a quiet talk with you before you go into quarters. I have begged your wife to write to me sometimes, but I would not take up a moment of the time you can be in Paris. It is much fitter for you to be there than here.

In another short letter, Madame de Maintenon thanks the Duc de Noailles for certain acts of charity :—

I thank you, my dear duke, for what you are willing to do for Madame de Barneval.* If you give her warm lodgings, you will

* Mrs. Barnwell, or Barnwall, was an Irish lady who had followed the fortunes of James II. and his noble Queen.

save her life. I am better than I ought to be, considering where my heart is.

Just before Christmas Madame de Maintenon again wrote a long letter to Princess des Ursins.

M. Geffroy gives the date of 1708 to the following undated conversation between Madame de Maintenon and Madame de Glapion, which has generally been assigned to the year 1711. He is guided partly by what is said of the Duke of Burgundy's disastrous campaign and the sufferings of his poor duchess.

“My God! my daughter, what wonderful things I see in the country in which I am obliged to live! It seems to me that I am rather like people behind the scenes in a theatre, who see the reality of what is represented. Whilst those who are in front of the stage are transported with admiration, they see that what looks like an enchanted palace is nothing but a sheet of waxed canvas, and that those wonderful machines and beautiful illuminations are nothing but ropes and ugly slips full of wax and lamp-black. In this way I see the world in all its ugliness, while a thousand people who are looking upon it without sounding the depths are dazzled with its splendour. I see passions of all kinds—treachery, baseness, senseless ambition; here some frightful spirit of envy; there people eating out their hearts, ready to tear each other to pieces; in a word, a thousand evil doings, and often only for trifles. Would not these things suffice to induce me to banish myself to the ends of the earth, and go back to America [the West Indies], if I were not continually told that God wills me to be where I am? These are not my only troubles, and I am assailed by a thousand difficulties of thought and conscience. I am afraid for the King's salvation, for our princes, for the Duchess of Burgundy. There are a thousand circumstances, as I have already said, in which I do not know which side to take between what would be most for God's glory and the danger of disgusting all

these people [the royal family] with piety. For instance, that music which is the only real pleasure the King has, and in which one hears nothing but ideas absolutely contrary to the Gospels and Christianity, it would be right, it seems to me, to give it up or change its character. If I say a word, the King replies directly, 'But it has always been so; the Queen my mother and the Queen, who went to Communion three times a week, looked on at it [the opera] as I do.' It is true that upon him personally these ideas make no sort of impression, for he is taken up entirely with the beauty of the music, the sounds, the instrumentation, etc.; and he is often singing his own praises without an idea that they are addressed to himself, simply out of liking for the melodies. But it is not the same thing for the rest of the spectators, among whom it is impossible that there should not be some whom these thoroughly pagan ideas impress too much. Formerly the King took exceeding pleasure in the beautiful cantiques of 'Esther' and 'Athalie;' but now he is almost ashamed to have them sung, because he feels that they are tiresome to the Court people.

"Is it not deplorable that among Christians, and with a King who assuredly would not willingly offend God, who fears Him, who is really religious, there should be such practices? No doubt, if the King were quite determined to have holy, or at any rate innocent, words sung, instead of the diabolical subjects scattered through the operas, clever men would be eager to compose them; but he dreads setting up a new thing which the public would not like."

Madame de Glapion observed that she had read somewhere, on this subject, that those who say that what is heard at the opera goes in at one ear and out at the other, forget that the heart is between the two.

"That is very well said," answered Madame de Maintenon, "and I am certain that no one is so able to resist the occasions of sin on leaving these entertainments as after going away from Vespers. In regard to this, I said one day to the Duke of Burgundy, who is a saint, 'What shall you do, Monseigneur, when,

you are ruler? Shall you forbid operas, plays, and such entertainments, for many people maintain that, if there were none, there would be still worse dissipations?' He replied, 'I should carefully weigh the for and against; I should examine the disadvantages there might be on both sides; and I should maintain that which had the least.' Is not this wonderful goodness in so young a prince?

"What astonishes me," she added, "when I think of it—but without disturbance, for I know that God can derive His own glory from the defeat of His plans as well as from their success—is to find that a quantity of things I have done with the greatest wish to procure His glory, the good of the Church, and the salvation of the King, have turned out badly. For instance, I desired that the Duc de Beauvilliers and M. de Chevreuse should be the King's friends, that he might see good men who were capable of giving him a love of virtue, and of drawing him away from the corrupt ideas and flattery that surround him. It turned out badly, and I am very sorry for it, without regretting what I did, because, in truth, my only aim was to do a good thing for God's glory and the King's salvation.

"I intended to do good also when I obtained the nomination of MM. de Noailles and de Fénelon as Archbishops of Paris and Cambrai; but I was so grieved about them in the end that the King said to me, 'Well, madame, are we to see you die for this matter?' I feel no less troubled about Monseigneur de Noailles now; but what comforts me is that I intended to do what was right, and the late Monseigneur de Chartres thought of these two men as I did, and looked upon them as holy persons, well fitted to serve the Church."

After thinking a little, she said, "Princes will never face any sad things. They are accustomed to have them always kept out of sight, and I see myself brought by conscientious duty, by my friendship for the King, and the true interest I take in everything that concerns him, to tell him the truth, not to flatter him, to let him see that he is often deceived, and that bad advice is given him. Think what a position it is to be obliged in this way to

distress one who is beloved, and whom one would like never to displease. Yet this is what I am obliged to do. I grieve him often when he comes to me only to be comforted. On the other hand, the Duchess of Burgundy, who has really dreadful troubles, brings them all to me. For instance, she came to me yesterday, just as I was going to bed, not being able to bear any longer the excessive fatigue. She threw herself upon me, and kept me a long time, telling me her troubles. I was obliged to remain half undressed, because, if I had got into bed, she could not have spoken to me freely, as the table where the King was writing is close to my bed. She is good enough to ask me if she is in my way; but with all the liberty she gives me, begging me to treat her as my daughter, it is impossible to deal with her as a nobody, or not to pay her every sort of attention. All our princes think that I am not the least under restraint with them, and, indeed, they would let me be quite at ease; but I think more of them than of myself, and I only do what I feel to be suitable to them. They are under the idea, too, that when I have seen them I do not want to see any one else; and when they are going away, they generally say, 'I shall shut the door, shall I not? You are going to be alone? You do not want to see anybody else?'

"That is exactly what Monseigneur de Cambrai [Fénelon] reproached them with," said Madame de Glapion, "when he told them they thought seeing them was the Beatific Vision." Madame de Maintenon laughed, and said, "Yes, I fancy they think it all-sufficient, and takes the place of everything else."

It is very difficult indeed, notwithstanding all her plain speaking to this real friend, to reproduce to ourselves the extraordinary difficulties under which Madame de Maintenon laboured; but unless we do so in some degree, it is impossible to do her justice. On the one hand there was the King, harassed in his declining years by misfortune and defeat, the ruin of his long-cherished prosperity, and not knowing how to meet the expenses of his disastrous

wars ; while the greater part of his Court secretly ridiculed his devoutness and his regular life, scoffed at his loyal affection for his admirable wife, and strove by every conceivable allurements to detach him from the bonds of Christian life. On the other hand, the Archbishop of Paris, on account of his miserable obstinacy in religious matters, had withdrawn himself from kindly intercourse with the King and Madame de Maintenon. Instead of helping them to stem the growing torrent of frank irreligion and the reckless profligacy which was tending more and more to degrade the noble families and make them hated by the people, he was strengthening the Jansenist party by defying the Holy See and insisting upon a certain rigorous, gloomy prohibition of innocent amusements, that opened a wider gulf between good Catholics and the "world," and created a spirit of defiance that sometimes broke into insult. About this time the Archbishop of Paris forbade not only the plays at St. Cyr, but prohibited all plays in convents.

There is no doubt that St. Cyr, like all other good things, was subject to many drawbacks from its nearness to the Court at Versailles. One day, when the Duchess of Burgundy was in the chapel—probably during Vespers—she saw a number of people outside the chapel grating pushing their walking-sticks and fans through it, so as to put aside the curtains and allow them a full view of the girls. The duchess, much shocked at this insulting rudeness, got up from her place, and not only drew the smaller, ordinary curtains, but the large heavy hangings, which, together with the rebuke of her grave, displeased face, covered the impertinent wrong-doers with confusion.

Another day the duchess went to St. Cyr for the

Tenebræ in Holy Week, when the Court pages, who must have been sadly in want of a strict discipline, brought all sorts of rattles to spring after the *Benedictus*, when the last candle of the triangle is always put out. No sooner was the usual slight noise * made on that occasion than all the rattles were suddenly sprung at once, making the most frightful din, which was added to by peals of rude laughter from the pages. The duchess gave them a sharp reprimand when she left the chapel ; but one of the pages had the impudence to write a note to Mdlle. de Puitbare, one of the girls, saying how much he was struck with her beauty. The poor girl, who was not in any way to blame, was excessively angry.

* While the last antiphon at *Tenebræ* is being recited, the last candle of the triangle of lights is taken out and hidden, symbolizing the approaching death of Christ as Light of the World. After the following *Miserere* and prayer a slight noise is made—usually with the office-books—by the choir, typifying the general sorrow and confusion at the betrayal and Passion. The antiphon is, *Traditor autem dedit eis signum, dicens : Quem osculatus fuero ipse est, tenete eum.*

CHAPTER XX.

1709.

THE overtures of peace made by Louis XIV. to the Grand Alliance—the Emperor, the States-General, and England—in 1709 were met by conditions so humiliating to France, that every true Frenchman, as Madame de Maintenon said, was crying out that war should be continued. But the misery and starvation of the overburdened country were so terrible that a counter-current of feeling set in. To this Madame de Maintenon alludes in the following letter to the Duc de Noailles:—

St. Cyr, June 9, 1709.

I do not know if your courier will let me know when he starts, but I am going to write to you on that understanding. Your situation is on a small scale what that of Marshal Villars is on a great one. It is maintained that things are better in Dauphiné and Germany. As to the miserable commission that the King laid before you when you left, there is no more question of it.* Peace will not be made; and supposing it were made, the King of Spain will not return [here]; but our own King, after reading your letter, ordered me to send you word that in no case should you be employed in such an office. It would not suit you, and would alarm me exceedingly. . . . When it was known that the King had

* Louis XIV. had proposed to the Duc de Noailles, who was going to command at Roussillon, to go on into Spain and let the King know that it might be necessary for France to sacrifice the Spanish alliance as a condition of peace (Geffroy).

refused the shameful proposals for peace that the enemy made to M. de Torcy, everybody applauded and demanded war ; but that agitation did not last, and people soon fell back into the discouragement which you witnessed. When you were here, how many times have you heard it said, "Why is our plate left untouched ? We should be delighted if the King had it all." But ever since the most zealous have set the example, others are alarmed and discontented. They think it is for the King to begin to draw in, and everybody grudges him his expenditure. His journeys to Marly are the ruin of the country ; they would like to deprive him of his horses, his dogs, his servants ; they fall upon his furniture ; and, in a word, he is to be the first stripped. These murmurs are uttered at his very door, and people would like to stone me, because they imagine that I never tell him anything disagreeable, lest it should give him pain. Nevertheless, the King has lowered his table at Marly ; he has sent his gold plate to the mint, and his jewels to M. Desmaretz to see if they can be pledged ; but no one takes account of anything but what is not done. I confess to you that this state of things make me shiver with fear, and that you are very much needed here by me.

The irritation against you know who * increases daily, and is extended to his master. He cannot make up his mind to give him up, because he pities him so much, and because he is wearing himself out just now in his service.

The King's children seem to be awake to the state of things. The Dauphin talks more and listens. He even carries to the King the complaints made to him ; but after that he says, "I spoke about it," and by that means causes his father to be more blamed. The Duchess of Burgundy is even more depressed than I am. It is her natural bent, and she knows too much of the causes and circumstances of her condition. She loves the King, she loves her husband, she loves her father, and she loves her sister. They are all sources furnishing matter enough for anxieties, without reckoning those of every day, each one of which passes

* M. de Chamillart.

slowly. . . . Our princes will not join the army; food is too uncertain. The Chevalier de St. George is going to Flanders, if he can find [money] enough to start with; and, anyhow, it could not be given him. The Queen* is no longer paid; everything has come to the last state of need.

I was one of the first to send away my plate [sold or pledged for the public expenses]. You will lose more by this than I shall, and you would not have made a single objection. There was enough to bring thirteen or fourteen thousand francs. If we had only to eat off earthenware we should get quit very cheaply.

. . . It seems to me that all possible orders have been given for corn. Some has come to Dunkirk; it comes in from all quarters; there is a great deal upon the quays at Paris. Notwithstanding all this, the price of bread is not lowered, and there are often riots in the markets. An order has been issued that only two sorts of bread are to be made—one brown, for the poor, at a low price, and one seconds [half white], for the rich, which would be rather dearer. It is necessary to consult so many people about this that the business lags, and the jealousies among the various officials make it still worse.

People are a little scandalized at the favours shown to M. de Vendôme at Meudon by the Dauphin,† and our princess, keeping up her character, is not in haste to go there. . . .

On coming back to my room from St. Cyr yesterday, I found on the table a letter from M. de Chamillart, telling me of his dismissal. The King at the same time gives him all possible tokens of kindness. M. de Beauvillier took him the message. He is free to go wherever he likes, so long as it is not to Court. He has a very large pension and one for his wife. His son's is continued, and he is to have the office at Cavoie in survival [of his father]. M. Voysin came this morning, and the King made known to him that he was appointed to the post [Minister of State]. I pity him

* Louis XIV. had generously paid a pension to Mary Beatrice of England up till this time.

† The Dauphin did not like his son, the Duke of Burgundy, and was fond of showing favour to his enemies.

more than his predecessor. It was Monseigneur [the Dauphin] who finally decided the King.

I was taken with fever at St. Cyr, and I still have it. Take care of your own fever, I implore you ; you are not as strong in body as in mind. Good-bye. I can say no more. I reckon on you, my dear duke ; count upon me.

A letter to Marshal de Villars gives a few words, painfully showing the change of feeling towards the unfortunate royal family of Stuarts at St. Germain :—

Marly, June 14, 1709.

. . . You must have been sorry for the resignation of M. de Chamillart, but the King was obliged to yield to the public voice. I hope M. Voysin will be less given to discouragement and will serve with greater energy. . . .

The Queen of England ordered me yesterday to implore you from her to treat the Chevalier de St. George well.* You will have him on Tuesday. He marches with very little baggage, he can eat coarse food, and I am assured that he will give you very little trouble. He has a passionate wish to follow you wherever you go, and the King says that if that is genuine he will show some energy. He is an adventurer who does not know very well what to do. If he dies, he will want nothing again ; if he lives and follows you, he will make a reputation that will contribute to his restoration. The Queen asks you to advise him, to reprove him when he fails in any way, and to urge him on as far as is right. You will, I hope, find him well disposed. . . .

Leaving aside for the moment her correspondence with the rulers of Europe and those who ruled them, Madame de Maintenon turned to one of her many good works, for one of the poor servant-girls brought up separately from the school at St. Cyr. The Bishop of Auxerre, to whom she wrote, was brother-in-law to Madame de Caylus.

* He had gone to serve in the French army in Germany.

St. Cyr, June 26, 1709.

I begin by thanking you, sir, for what you would like to do for Margaret Cléret. I have learned from the Dames de St. Cyr what her powers are, and they say that she is a very good girl, knowing how to read, but not to write, very well instructed in her Catechism, expressing herself well, gentle and patient, with very little mind. If, after this description, you think she will be of any use to you, I will give her with the heartiest pleasure the *pistolets* [pieces of ten francs] I am offering her. Even if I had spent my life with you, sir, and if you had the greatest wish to please me, you could not have said anything better as to my inclinations, which all lean towards teaching and soup ; for the want of both is so great that the bishops cannot provide too much of them. You touch justly also, sir, upon the misery of our present condition. Every day there is greater want among the poor, while the means of helping are lessened among the wealthy, because the whole evil springs from the same causes. It would not be bearable if it did not come from the hand of God. . . .

Cardinal de Noailles was so embittered by the loyal opposition of the Jesuits to his obstinate adherence to Quesnel, that, with a few exceptions, such as Père le Tellier, the King's confessor, and one or two others, he refused them faculties for hearing confessions in his diocese. Louis XIV. begged him to withdraw his prohibition, and the Cardinal asked for an audience to plead his own cause, at the same time writing copiously to Madame de Maintenon. Her answer is as full of dignified respect as of the characteristic wisdom by which she so essentially served the cause of religion :—

St. Cyr, July 3, 1709

Our departure is put off till the 13th of this month, and I think, monseigneur, you can choose between next Wednesday or the Wednesday that we go, as it will not be till after dinner, to

avoid the heat. If the King orders it otherwise, you shall be told of it.

You will never be mistaken, monseigneur, when you reckon upon what you call my kindness. I can never cease to respect my archbishop, to esteem your virtues, and, if I may venture to say so, to feel affection for yourself; but it is true that these feelings now only give me bitter pain.

I shall not answer all the subjects of your letter, because we have spoken of them a hundred times uselessly.

There is one [subject] that you do not touch upon, monseigneur, that of the Jesuits, which the King does not look upon as concerning your conscience, but purely as a feeling of revenge, which you could sacrifice for him, either whether you wished in truth to be revenged upon them, or whether you thought it a duty to punish them for their want of respect for you.

These are all subjects of sacrifice that you could make in so many instances that it would be tiresome and useless to go over them again.

If the King grows more and more bitter [upon this subject] it can only be within himself, for I think he does not speak of it. I have no doubt that you pray for him, monseigneur; for you are too good a Frenchman not to desire him to live, and your kind heart must suffer very much when you give him cause for sorrow. My own is great, and I am not without sympathy for your dear nephew's grief.

In the following letter to the Duc de Noailles, Madame de Maintenon alludes to some touching efforts made by the Queen of Spain to detach her father from the league against Louis XIV. M. Geffroy is inclined to believe that, in spite of the difference of date, the letter he gives may be the one alluded to, especially as it is only a copy, and the dates of that time are often very inaccurate. The political baits held out to the Duke of Savoy were probably suggested by Princess des Ursins, and the letter

rather bears the stamp of her exuberant imagination, but the postscript may certainly be accepted as the Queen's only.

St. Cyr, July 28, 1708.

. . . The dearth of corn and money exhausts our best endeavours and all possible ingenuity. Marshal Villars by his good generalship has arrested the enemy and changed their plans, but he finds himself always on the edge of perishing for want of food. You on your side feel the same want. Still it is quite true that our affairs would take a new face if the harvest of barley and oats causes the price of corn to fall, if nothing worse than the taking of Tournay or some other place happens in Flanders, and you hold your ground fairly in Spain. Everybody is convinced that there is more money in Paris than there has ever been. If M. Desmaretz can re-establish some degree of credit by annulling bills of exchange (paper-money), we should have time to make arrangements for the next campaign. I am certain that M. Voysin will be of great use. M. de Chamillart lost everything by his obstinacy. He would absolutely reckon on peace, and made no preparations for war. This has brought us into our present dangerous position. That poor man [Chamillart] does not manage his loss of power better than his prosperous days. He asks to see the King; he makes a display of his marked kindness, and there is pretence made of his return [to power], which is not likely, but which nevertheless does mischief to those now in office. This, I believe, is what causes the continual change of officials in Paris, where there seems to be no settled condition.

You may be sure that the Duchess of Burgundy saw that part of your letter that referred to her, and that she was not untouched by it. She is now laid up in bed for a fortnight. . . .

I do not know what the letter is that the Queen of Spain has written to the Duke of Savoy. That prince begins to waver,* but the Duke of Berwick does not seem uneasy about it.

The Spaniards are not treacherous, and I should reckon much

* As to continuing the war against Louis XIV. with the allies.

upon their attachment to the King if they were not as moneyless as ourselves. They will feel the loss of M. Amelot, who seems to me to have acted ably in all that has happened since he has been ambassador. Princess des Ursins is not coming back yet, but she may easily become suspected by the Spaniards. They will be irritated with her, but I can bear witness that her conduct has been very noble and upright.

A Norman bishop, I think of Lisieux [it was Bayeux] (he is named Nesmond), having heard that three battalions were going by and were without food, sent them a thousand francs for each battalion. My Archbishop of Rouen * thrust himself bravely into the midst of three thousand rioters and helped to pacify them; but what is still finer is that the governor, the Archbishop, the first president and steward [of Rouen] are all united in doing their best for the King. It is not so at Paris. Our magistrates are divided in opinion as to what to do to obtain bread, the price of which rises every day. The people are always on the edge of rebellion.

I am not surprised that you write to me in haste. Why do you not dictate while you rest a little, especially when you are not well? My health is not very bad; I am withering away visibly, but I am fairly well. I am rather less depressed, and I have more hope. The siege of Tournay goes on, the garrison makes energetic sallies, and the floods are wonderful. . . .

This is the letter of the Queen of Spain to which Madame de Maintenon refers:—

Madrid, January 31, 1708.

Why do you think, my dear father, that I do not care for you any longer, that I have even forgotten you, as you sent me word some time ago by my mother? I am very much offended, being so far from such a fact. For I can indeed assure you that I have always tenderly loved you. It seems to me that I have much more reason to reproach you, for you are doing your best to seize

* D'Aubigné, Madame de Maintenon's cousin, or *soi-disant* cousin, had been translated (1707) from Noyon to Rouen.—Geffroy.

my crown, and thus do not give me any proofs of the love you ought to feel for me. I hope that in the end you will allow yourself to be softened by a daughter who is pierced with grief at all that is going on, who truly loves you, and who wishes everything to turn to your advantage. You will find it to be so if you will be friends with us. I promise you that your dominions shall be enlarged either by giving you the whole [state] of Milan, which will be easily recovered as soon as you come to an understanding with us so as to let our troops return to that territory. If that is not enough for you, I will undertake to arrange with the two kings to give you the title of King of Lombardy. This is how I should like to revenge myself upon you. . . . I repeat that I can make good what I promise, and that this is between you and me, without the intervention of any minister. I shall wait very impatiently for your answer. Let it comfort me, and prove your love, which I do deserve so much, my dear father, on account of mine for you.

MARIE LOUISE.

I believe you will never leave off being astonished when you think of your Louison, the name I have had so long, and reading a letter from her like this; but you make me grow grave in spite of myself. I have become so grave, indeed, after despatching what I have to-day, that I think I shall never again be allowed to call you my dear papa. But do be this to me, and let me be your Louison, and let us love each other like two good friends.

In the following letter to the Duc de Noailles, Madame de Maintenon refers very slightly to the disgraceful conduct of the Duke of Orleans, whom she was too much inclined to defend, together with other public matters of interest :—

St. Cyr, September 3, 1709.

You will not be surprised, my dear duke, that I begin my letter in one place and go on with it in another. Where it will

be finished I do not know. In the interval, we have learnt that the citadel of Tournay capitulated on the last day of August. Marshal de Boufflers does all he can to uphold M. Surville's defence. Marshal de Villars finds great fault with it. As a battle may be feared, the King has sent Marshal de Boufflers to Arras on account of what may befall Marshal de Villars. . . . The général ought not to be displeased that M. de Boufflers should be in one wing, but I do not know how the matter will be disentangled. We are staking heavily upon this battle, my dear duke. God only knows what is going to become of us !

Starvation will soon reach even ourselves. We have not a penny, and corn rises every day. You will feel the King's sufferings and those of all about him.

The respect that I owe the Duke of Orleans makes me feel that I cannot say a word about his affair.* I am sorry to see how injurious it is to him. On the other hand, he leads a publicly scandalous life. The King suffers from this both in affection and conscience. Whichever way we turn, it is all affliction. Your proposal has been thought sound, fine, and well planned out, but means fail us on all sides. I do not know which is the most pitiable, to serve far away with the difficulties you have, or to witness close at hand the state we are in. May God grant us patience in the same measure as we have our trials !

. . . I am much pleased with Madame de Chatillon ; it seems to me that the Duchess de Noailles gets on very well with her. And then she leads the most innocent life in the world. She spends her days in her own room or at St. Cyr ; she works, she sings, and it seems to me that she would rather be at home than abroad. . . .

Marshal de Boufflers, who, as has been shown, was

* The Duke of Orleans had, in fact, betrayed the cause of the King of Spain, whom he had been sent to serve. Finding that cause nearly desperate, he lent ear to certain malcontents who proposed to place the duke himself upon the throne. With this view, he entered into treasonable correspondence with the English commander ; but, having employed a subaltern officer to carry on the negotiations, his papers were seized and sent to France.—Geffroy.

aged and in very bad health, and whom all circumstances justified in taking his well-earned repose, had that year volunteered to serve under Marshal de Villars in any capacity he chose. Marshal de Villars welcomed the old general warmly, and wrote a short letter to the King, in which he said :—

The proofs he [the marshal] gives of his zeal and energy in such important circumstances are the best means of awakening the slackening energies of others. . . . I am sure that nothing could have a better effect. It shows Frenchmen what they owe to your Majesty, to the State, and to themselves.

Upon reading this letter, Madame de Maintenon immediately wrote to Marshal de Villars :—

St. Cyr, September 7, 1709.

Nothing can be finer, sir, than what Marshal de Boufflers has done ; but no one could be so deeply touched by it as you are, unless he were capable of the same act in like circumstances. I have seen with great pleasure what you have written about it, as well as the satisfaction to Him* whom you wished to please. May God reward your uprightness by some fortunate event, or by hindering some great disaster from the enemy ! I am always expecting this, and it is a time of great anxiety. Allow me, sir, by my great interest in all that concerns you, to entreat you not to be too much irritated with M. de Surville,† for you will make all his friends and relations your enemies by it [your anger]. If you had been able to save Tournay or the rest of the campaign, it would have been well to sacrifice your own interest to the King or the State ; but now what is done is done. Depend upon my speaking, sir, only for your sake. . . .

Three days afterwards, Madame de Maintenon wrote to Madame de Pérou, superior of the Dames de St. Louis,

* The King. The capital letter is Madame de Maintenon's.

† The commander who had surrendered Tournay.

on the eve of the dreadful defeat of the French army at Malplaquet :—

September 10, 1709.

The armies have met in Flanders; a courier came to announce this to the King at five o'clock this morning. Set the whole house to praying, I beseech you, and let everybody go to the ten o'clock Mass to offer the holy sacrifice to God for our protection. Do not forget to invoke the Blessed Virgin.

A letter rapidly follows to the Duc de Noailles :—

St. Cyr, September 14, 1709.

The news of your little victory* arrived at Versailles yesterday, a quarter of an hour after that of the loss of the battle in Flanders, and you will know, my dear duke, that our grief was greater than our joy. Still, I heard what was said to the King—that what you did was well planned, well led, and well carried out. M. Voysin has written nearly the same thing to me, sending me the details of the action.

You will easily believe that I am rather cast down by the scenes I have gone through during these three days. I am not indifferent to the general interests, and I am scarcely less touched, by those of individuals. I have witnessed the affliction of the greater number of the wives of the killed and wounded, which still are not so very many for a battle that lasted eight hours, and which wavered from side to side from the valour that grew to fury. From what is told of the details, it seems that we might have won had not Marshal de Villars been wounded, as the wing that he commanded gave way when he left it. Infantry was despatched to that wing, by which ground was left undefended, which the enemy immediately occupied. The wound [Villars'] is dangerous, and I am very much afraid we shall lose him. I have not heard that a single word of blame has been given as to his whole conduct either at Court or in the army. He received Marshal de Boufflers in a way that has greatly increased my regard for him—I mean

* In Catalonia.

Marshal de Villars. His wife is going to join him. As to Marshal de Boufflers, he has heaped upon himself glory that he had no need of. There is not a regiment at the head of which he did not charge. He was a very lion in courage, and gave his commands as coolly as if he had been in his own room. M. d'Artagnan had three horses killed under him, and distinguished himself very much, not only by his bravery, but by his conduct [in attack]. The King of England [James Stuart] was there, with fever upon him, and did wonders.

Marshal de Boufflers has written a letter to the King, of which I am told there are to be copies given. I hope one will be sent to you with a list of the killed or wounded, which will, no doubt, be much increased when we know more particulars. I am very unhappy about Madame de Dangeau; there is very little appearance of her son's recovery.* . . .

You may well believe that I am rather worn out, and have been obliged to use Mdle. d'Aumale's hand to write you such a long letter. Your absence seems to me very long, and you would be a help and comfort to me. It is not God's will, but He does will that I should love you with great esteem and affection.

Marshal de Boufflers calls the battle that has been fought [Malplaquet] "glorious and disastrous."

These two last lines are in Madame de Maintenon's own hand.†

* The Marquis de Courcillon, whose leg was carried away by a cannon-ball.

† Geffroy.

CHAPTER XXI.

1710-1711.

THE Duc de Noailles distinguished himself very much by his gallant and rapid movement from Roussillon to join M. de Roquelaure, who was threatened by an invasion upon the coast of Provence. He drove the opposing force from Cette, and obliged it to put to sea again. Madame de Maintenon wrote to him, overflowing with joy:—

Versailles, August 17, 1710.

You think then, duke, that we are all fools here, and that no one has heard of the marvels and skilfulness of your generalship? You make a mistake. When your simple, brief letter came, the King said, “He did not want to give the details of what happened. He has left it to the commander and the chief lieutenant to send particulars.” That letter was weighed, therefore, with all the circumstances to the very end, where you so affectionately beg of the War Minister to let your relations know the news. I should have been really offended if there had been anything else for me. When the courier or M. de Roquelaure’s orderly gave me two letters, I said that they would be from M. de Roquelaure and M. de Baville. You see, sir, that we have some discernment, and that you are known a little. No man has ever been more praised than you have been. The not waiting for commands, the resolution taken at once, your serving as a subaltern, the orders that were given, the incredible quickness, the provisioning the troops, the swiftness of the attack, the enthusiasm of the army,

their love for their general, your return to Roussillon—all these things have been well weighed, and I have not yet heard of any grudging slaps. I say nothing of your bravery, for that would offend you; but the two brothers have been named. Give my compliments to the canon.* He would not have had such a success at Notre Dame.

I dined with your wife, who ought soon to be put to bed. She has suffered a great deal from toothache. . . . Our union with Spain is the only thing spoken of here; and the ladies, putting their caps † together, discuss whether or not there will be a treaty. It will be very different at Marly, where we go on the 20th.

I am more solitary than ever. I saw Père de la Rue ‡ yesterday, who wished you were made constable. He loves you most dearly. Good-bye, my dear duke. I reckon on you. Do the same for me.

An extract merely must be given from a letter some months later from Madame de Maintenon to Princess des Ursins :—

St. Cyr, December 15, 1710.

. . . Pray think well of my speaking freely to you of the Duchess of Burgundy. After having borne much talk as to the false measures I took during her education; after being blamed by everybody for the freedom with which she was running about from morning till night; after having seen her hated by everybody because she never would utter a word; after having heard her accused of horrible dissimulation as to her affection for the King, and the goodness with which she honoured me, I now find the whole world singing her praises, extolling her excellent heart,

* Count de Noailles had been intended for the Church, but being made very young a canon of Notre Dame, he “left the priest’s collar (*petit collet*) for the sword.”

† *Rayons*. Madame de Maintenon alludes to the enormous headdresses in the shape of rays.

‡ Père de la Rue was the Duchess of Burgundy’s Jesuit confessor—a good preacher, writer, and cultivated man of letters.—Geffroy.

admiring her talents, and agreed on all hands that she knows how to command the respect of a great Court. I see her worshipped by the Duke of Burgundy, tenderly loved by the King, who has just put her house into her own hands to do with as she will, publicly saying at the same time that she would be capable of governing in much greater things.* I am sharing my joy about this with you, madame, because I am convinced that you will be very glad to know it, for you discerned sooner than others the great qualities of this princess.

The Duc de Noailles, who had been besieging Gerona amidst great difficulties, obliged it to capitulate in January, 1711, and the news was received with great rejoicing at the French Court. Madame de Maintenon wrote almost immediately to the duke :—

Marly, February 6, 1711.

I am very joyful, and I have bought the joy by much pain, not from the stupid talk I have heard as to the siege being raised, but from other causes ; such as the delay caused by the deluge of wet, the scarcity of your food, the difficulty of getting any, the small skill of your engineers, the capacity of M. de Staremberg,† the rage of the people, your anxieties and fatigue. All this, my dear duke, has made me pass very bad nights, as I was often fancying myself in your place, which was extremely bad for me.

At last Gerona is taken, and all the difficulties now make for your renown. Madame,‡ who has just left my room after complimenting me upon it, assured me that you were still loved and heartily praised, and we have come to the conclusion that if you go on, you may easily come to be hated and blamed.

M. Voysin was announced at the same moment that the captain of the guard came to give notice about the meat. You know who is in my room at that time [the King], and we ex-

* Louis XIV. said, " I leave her absolute mistress of her own house. She would be capable of more difficult and important things."

† The general commanding for the Archduke of Austria.

‡ The Dowager Duchess of Orleans.

claimed that there was news of Gerona. M. Voysin came in, followed by a little man with a great beard, who began his story in a voice and tone that delighted our princes. Great was the joy when it was known that the forts had surrendered, for we had reckoned only on the taking of the town. I shall not tell you about M. Planqué's account of the whole attack, holding a map in his hand. The King took a singular pleasure in this account, and I sat up and heard it without any difficulty.* What I remembered best is what was said of you. M. Planqué said, "I have served under all your generals, and you have not one that comes near this one. He has the prudence and foresight of Turenne, the valour and watchfulness of Créquy, the same understanding of artillery as Freselière, and the knowledge of detail of Jacquier." Everybody then went away to bed, or rather, I should say, to supper. I lay awake a long time very happily, and then had an exceedingly good night.

The next day the King told me that your despatch was wonderful ; that he had never known so many orders so well given ; that there was not a single officer who did not know what he had to do ; and that you had carried foresight so far as to forbid the soldiers to press too far into the town, as there were entrenchments and hindrances in the houses, and that they must advance step by step. We are expecting the courier from you to tell us what you are going to do. I am very sure that you will not quarrel with M. de Vendôme as to the matters which the Court ladies maintain ; but I should be a little afraid of your difference of opinion upon the siege of Barcelona, and that in Spain they should not ascribe to you something of the King's opposition, who very naturally thinks as you do.

This letter was dictated, but Madame de Maintenon added in her own hand :—

The King had begun to be uneasy about Gerona. He is enchanted and most truly satisfied with you. It seems to me that

* Madame de Maintenon alludes to her increasing deafness.

he has done everything you wished for the officers. As to yourself, that will come by-and-by, and I am very certain that you will be satisfied so long as he is. He has some fear of little difficulties, and I answered that you were sure to reply for yourself, and that I knew you well enough to be certain what you thought. I am enchanted that you have put M. de Brancas [the French ambassador in Spain] in the way of favours, and I beg you to give him my compliments upon what he has received.

The Duchess de Noailles is to come here for some balls, but she has never seemed less eager for them. Good-bye, my dear duke. I came to "The Rest" to write to you more at leisure, but the cold drives me away. You do not wish me to die, and you are right, for certainly you would lose what is scarcely ever to be found again.

In the next letter to Princess des Ursins, Madame de Maintenon speaks of a personage who afterwards became celebrated as Marshal Duc de Richelieu, Voltaire's friend and the hero of Port Mahon. This budding celebrity she elsewhere describes as follows :—

There has appeared [at Court] for the first time a young courtier, the son of M. de Richelieu, who is called Duc de Fronsac. He is sixteen, but looks twelve; and little as he is, he has the prettiest figure in the world. He has a fine face and a perfectly beautiful head; he is one of the best dancers, rides well, plays, [cards], likes music, and is good in conversation. He is respectful, very polite, and is capable of pleasant raillery; he is grave when it is necessary, and every one thinks of him much as I have described him. He is to be married as soon as we go to Versailles, to Mdlle. de Noailles, . . . who will have a fortune of five hundred thousand crowns. She is plain, but has a good figure, is sensible, and eighteen."

Mdlle. de Noailles was first cousin to the duke. This future Duc de Richelieu, who married first at fifteen and

a half, was a bridegroom for the third time at eighty-four.*

Versailles, February 23, 1711.

I received your letter, madame, yesterday evening, and I see that your secretary has changed your ink, and that my eyesight is not worse. . . .

I very much doubt if the King will allow the Duc de Noailles to accept the grandeeship,† for I see he is very much determined that no Frenchmen shall again enjoy that honour. It is true that peace is much longed for here, and that we are suffering greatly from the want of money. It is avarice, not abundance, that causes our courtiers to gamble. They stake everything to get a little money, and the *lansquenets* tables are more like some kind of dreary trading than amusement. . . .

The Duc de Fronsac is as pleasant as I have told you, but up till now he has not seemed dangerous to the ladies. He is fifteen, and does not look twelve; one would like to caress him as if he were a pretty child, and I was upon the point of taking him yesterday by the chin when he begged me to sign his marriage contract! . . .

In another quickly following letter to Princess des Ursins in the same month, Madame de Maintenon says:—

The King has not yet declared his intention as to the Duc de Noailles' grandeeship. He says he is waiting to hear from him, and I think I can give a good guess as to what will be in the letter. . . . We have seen Madame de Fronsac, who is perfectly ugly. They say she is clever and sensible. . . .

The favour with which the *amorino* Duc de Fronsac had been received was short-lived, and in a month's time Madame de Maintenon wrote the following letter to the Duc de Noailles:—

* Geffroy.

† It was proposed by Philip V. to make the duke a grandee of Spain.

St. Cyr, March 22, 1711.

They are going to send off to you our little prodigy, who is no longer prodigious. They find fault with him now as much as he was praised at Marly. I know nothing positive about him except that he fell into a snare laid for him at play. He lost twenty or thirty thousand francs at *quinze* with one man, who, it is declared, was joined with a good many others who had shares in his game. However that may be, my dear duke, the burden falls upon you. The Duc de Richelieu thinks that after this prank he must send him further away than he would be in Flanders; that the Marquis de Noailles, who is now the great object of his admiration, will look after him under you; that he will learn his trade perfectly, and that it is fair to take advantage of having such a first cousin. I have thought that all this is well considered, and I hope it will not annoy you more than is reasonable. He is the prettiest doll that one can see.

Princess des Ursins is always writing about the ease and advantage of besieging Barcelona, but no one thinks that it is so here. We are well persuaded that the enemy cannot touch us in Flanders. The general is not in a hurry to go there, having a dread of breaking into our magazines. Finance and war do not quite fit in [Desmaretz and Voysin]. There has been a little disturbance, but I am assured that nothing will come of it. I am more troubled than ever about your uncle [Cardinal de Noailles]. He has enemies, and he gives them the best opportunities of putting him at variance with his master. I am more shut up than ever. I cannot reconcile myself to what I see, and I have become unbearable to every one about our princess. She is keener for amusement than she ever was. I go to St. Cyr as much as I can.

I have made a mistake in folding my paper, and I have not the courage to repair it. . . .

The poor Dauphin, "Monseigneur," who never seems to have been of much use or pleasure to anybody during his life, and had, indeed, by his weakness lent himself to

dangerous cliques, was sincerely mourned by the King at his death. He died of that then most deadly plague, the small-pox, during the next month, April, 1711. Madame de Maintenon wrote on this occasion the following short note to Cardinal de Noailles :—

Marly, April 15, 1711.

Come when you like, monseigneur, to pay your sorrowful compliments. The King is cast down, but, thank God ! he is not ill. The infected air will prevent the due honours being paid to the body. It will be carried to St. Denis in a coach, with one chaplain, the first gentleman of the chamber, twelve guards, and twelve torches. It will not be opened [for embalming], and as soon as they arrive it will be placed in the vault. I have not strength, monseigneur, to say anything more.

Madame de Maintenon soon, however, regained her power of writing, and the following day a long letter to Princess des Ursins was despatched :—

Marly, April 16, 1711.

A worse feverish attack than usual, and Mdlle. d'Aumale's absence hindered me from writing to you by the last post, and answering your long letter of March 30, for which I return you a thousand thanks. I assure you, madame, that I never find them long enough.

But what subject can I treat of to-day, madame, in order to give you an account of the state of our Court, and of so many people in whom you are interested? You will have heard, madam, that after three days' illness, in which the doctors thought there was some malignity, small-pox declared itself on Saturday, the 11th, at half-past six in the morning. We were uneasy at the way it came out, as there was great lethargy ; but at eight o'clock it had much increased, the fever lessened, there was very favourable perspiration, and we remained in a state of hope and joy until Tuesday, when the King came into my room, followed by

M. Fagon, and said, "I have been to see my son, who has touched me so much that I thought I must have shed tears. His head has swelled during the last three or four hours prodigiously, he is scarcely recognizable, his eyes are nearly closed; but they tell me this is just what happens in smallpox, and Madame la Duchesse [Bourbon-Condé] and Princess de Conti say that they were in exactly the same state. His head is quite clear, and he told me that he hoped to see me in a better condition to-morrow."

Thereupon the King began to work [at business of the State] with M. Voysin and M. Desmaretz.

As you are aware, madame, I am not naturally inclined to be deceived, and I thought I saw some uneasiness in M. Fagon's face, but dared not question him on account of the King. I only sent to Princess de Conti to assure her of my sorrow, and Madame Durfé had the kindness to come to tell me from her that she knew perfectly well the state Monseigneur was in from having passed through it herself. She has not left him, and has taken care of him with much affection and courage.

The King went to supper just as usual, with these two princesses and the ladies of their suite, for our princess and she who is now called the Dauphine [Duchess of Burgundy] had stayed at Versailles by the King's orders. About eleven o'clock they came to fetch him, saying that Monseigneur was very ill. He went down, and found him in convulsions and unconscious. The *curé* of Meudon arrived before Père le Tellier, whom the King had had the foresight to keep at Meudon, and he exclaimed, "Monseigneur, are you not very sorry for having offended God?" Maréchal, who was holding him, asserts that he answered, "Yes." The *curé* went on: "If you were in a state to make your confession, would you not make it?" The prince answered, "Yes." Père le Tellier says that he pressed his hand, after which he gave him absolution.

But what a sight I beheld, madame, when I came into Monseigneur's large dressing-room! The King sitting on a couch, without shedding a tear, but shivering from head to foot; the duchess in desperate grief; Princess de Conti heart-stricken; all

the courtiers silent, a silence broken by the sobs and exclamations that were heard from the room every time it was thought that he had breathed his last.

The King had gone into the room three or four times before I got there to see if there were not a moment when Père le Tellier could come in, and they could send word for extreme unction. Then the King's carriages came. I had sent notice to the Duchess of Burgundy to be in the road the King would take, as she wished to come to Marly with him ; for I must tell you in passing that her conduct is wonderful. She divides herself incessantly between the King, the Duke of Burgundy, and the Duke of Berry. The King took the first coach that came, putting himself into it with the duchess [Bourbon] and Princess de Conti, and he wished me to have the honour of accompanying them.

The princesses implored him on the road to put no constraint on himself, and to give way to tears, being afraid of some seizure, but he could not shed a tear. The duchess uttered the most piercing cries, and then fell into a terrible silence. The Duchess of Burgundy was met with between the two stables, and she came quickly towards our coach. The King implored her not to get in, as it was filled with people who had just come out of Monseigneur's room, and her first duty was to go to the Duke of Burgundy and tell him of the death. We reached Marly, where no one expected us, and where no one had anything that he required. We waited with the King for what was necessary till four o'clock in the morning, when he went to bed.

When Monseigneur expired, his whole body was purple, which makes it necessary for him to be buried without ceremony. He will not be opened ; he will be carried in his own coach ; a first gentleman of the chamber, a chaplain, twelve guards, and twelve torches will accompany him, and on arriving at St. Denis he will be put into the vault. This is where all greatness ends !

. . . Monseigneur was much beloved. All Paris is grieved. Two fishwomen of La Halle went to see him, and he made them come in. They promised him to go and have a *Te Deum* sung for the good state in which they found him. He told them that

it was not time for that yet. He was throughout struck with his own age, saying, "I am fifty, yet I have the small-pox!" He was in great trouble because the King exposed himself so many times to the infected air.

Good-bye, madame. I hope the King will do well, however sorrow-stricken he may be, though he takes pains to hide it. He was so changed yesterday morning that he was hardly recognizable, but he was much better in the evening, because he had been out in the air. He said yesterday to the Dauphine* that he could not bear to be separated any more from her, or that our princes should have other houses of amusement than his. These commands were not displeasing to her.

A few days afterwards Madame de Maintenon wrote to the Duc de Noailles:—

Marly, April 27, 1711.

I shall not forget your name, my dear duke; I hear it too often, and I believe, in truth, that you are being too much praised. You increase my anxiety about the Queen [of Spain], whose illness seems to me serious. We are impatiently expecting news of her, and I hope shall have some by your courier. It seems that you and M. de Vendôme are of one mind, which I did not expect, and am enchanted to find myself mistaken.

You will have heard of Monseigneur's death, the account of which I sent to Princess des Ursins. M. d'Antin distinguished himself by his attentions as long as he lived, and Messieurs de Roche-Guyon, de Roucy, and de Sainte-Maure by their grief at his death. The Dauphin and Dauphine† fill a great position. Our princess says she feels herself growing bigger every minute, but all these events excite her so much that they impair her health. She is very much changed. Many things will have occurred to your mind at the Emperor's death.‡ I flatter myself that God will grant us peace, but it will not be so soon as I could wish.

* Duchess of Burgundy.

† The Duke of Burgundy, Monseigneur's eldest son, was now Dauphin.

‡ Joseph I., Emperor of Austria.

The Jansenists, Jesuits, Cardinal de Noailles, the Archbishop of Cambray, and several bishops, are making a great noise. If you wish to know my mind about it, I shall tell you that they are all very much in the wrong. Cardinal de Noailles has asked leave to come here to make his formal complaint, and I am much afraid that this audience will be a great annoyance to him who grants it and to him who has asked for it.

Nothing can equal the grief of the duchess [Bourbon-Condé]. She has fallen from a great height. Princess de Conti has been ill ever since Monseigneur's death. . . . The Duchess de Noailles is shut up in her room, not willing to see anybody, and only going out to Mass on Sundays. St. Cyr is forbidden her because there are a hundred and twenty girls there with measles. I fancy that the Duchess de Guiche has not left you in ignorance about M. and Madame de Boufflers, whose condition is very near to that of Job.* . . . You do not need to be exhorted to do your best. I only ask of you to recollect that there is no one but God who deserves such service as you give. I am very well, and I love you every day more and more.

* They had lost their eldest son, and the famous marshal himself died during the next August.

CHAPTER XXII.

1711-1712.

THE death of Monseigneur broke up the worst and most dangerous of the cabals that disturbed the reign of Louis XIV. The weak, passive, and unintelligent character of the Dauphin had allowed him to be surrounded and mastered by a circle of violent, ambitious people, who ruled him by turns. At their head was "Madame la Duchesse" (de Bourbon-Condé), the daughter of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan, who largely inherited her mother's character. The Prince of Lorraine and the Duc de Vendôme supported the intrigue for reasons of their own, knowing that the Dauphin had no love for his son the Duke of Burgundy, or much for his charming wife. The marriage of his third son, the Duke of Berry, had aggravated the evil. The duchess was the daughter of Philip II. of Orleans, the future regent of disastrous renown, and was, as St. Simon says, "a prodigy of talent, pride, ingratitude, folly, and wickedness." She at once mastered Monseigneur, and widened the breach with his son and daughter-in-law. All these intrigues and their schemes fell to the ground at his death.* During the next month

* Geffroy.

Madame de Maintenon sent one of her old familiar letters to Madame de Pérou, superior at St. Cyr :—

Fontainebleau, September, 1711 (day not given).

Our return is always put off by the pleasures of hunting and the beautiful weather. We must stay here without having any other will or wish but that of the master. My taste, however, will not lead towards stag-hunting. My attraction for Avon is very much blunted by the opposition I find to everything. Mathurin Roch cannot reconcile himself to my ignorance, nor I to his learning. I know all that I can teach or that he can learn, and he reads everything he can, and plunges my children into the depths of theology. They tell me every day that no one else ever says a word to them of what I teach them, and yet it seems to me that they never learn anything more. I should be comforted if there were only more of them. Françoise Payen cannot win over her father and mother, nor rid herself the least bit of her own attachment.* . . . I can only see my friends on Sundays, because they take their goods to market, or go out to look for work [in the week], and Sunday has to be divided between my prayers and the company who come to dine with me. Everywhere there are annoyances, except as to the King's health, which, without any exaggeration, improves very much. The prayers of our dear Dames may well contribute to this.

I have just received the pretty things [presents] from our girls, which are indeed most charming. I expect as many more to-morrow, and should never be tired of receiving them. I shall share them with Madame de Caylus, who admires them as much as I do. But this letter is a serious one, and to finish it as I have begun, my dear daughter, I beg of you to scold M. de Poitiers for asking me for a benefice. I think you can see things near enough to be certain that I do not rule Père le Tellier.

* A poor girl at Avon in whom Madame de Maintenon took great interest, who had an attachment that her parents opposed, but with the greatest gentleness. They never said a harsh word to her, so that Madame de Maintenon says, "They do not speak as well as we do, and we do not act as well as they do." Mathurin Roch was the *magister* or prefect of Avon.—Geffroy.

The distribution of ecclesiastical benefices was generally made by arrangements between the King and his confessor, to which Madame de Maintenon alludes in mentioning the Bishop of Poitiers and Père le Tellier, the King's Jesuit director, over whom, as she justly says, she never had the least control.

Nothing is more remarkable in Madame de Maintenon's enormous collection of letters than the variety of their style, which she so delicately adapted to her correspondents, that their characters are reflected in them for us, as in highly sensitive photographic negatives. They come before us, a whole gallery of finely distinguished portraits, to which we feel attracted or repelled as we should have been by the originals. Among them all, there is no one so marked with the frankest and quaintest charm as the Marquise de Dangeau, who invariably drew forth her friend's prettiest letters.

This Monday morning, from a delicious place,* October, 1711.

The King has allotted you, madame, Mdlle. d'Armagnac's bedroom; I have come in to look at it, and I have the honour of writing to you now from it. It looks toward the sunrise, it is warm, it is dry, it is opposite my windows; every morning I could bid you good-day with some pleasant gesture. You have nothing to fear, madame, but my wearying you out; for without reckoning the pleasure of seeing you, which I count upon indefinitely, you will perhaps save my life by the air I shall breathe here, and keep me from several sins of impatience which my own room causes. M. de Dangeau will be lodged with M. du Maine, and will only have one step to mount, which is easier than his own [quarters]. In one word, madame, you will recover your health here. We

* M. Geffroy thinks that this must have been Marly, where Madame de Maintenon had a dreary room, of which she often complained.

shall allow you all your [usual] failings—wadded gown, scarf, cap, and a napkin over your head ; these are all that I know of. This room is white, like you, and as dry as I am.”

The next letters to Princess des Ursins are all full of the approaching, long-deferred ratification of the peace of Europe. As it had been determined by the allies that the imperial and Spanish crowns could not be held by the same person, a great obstacle was removed to a settlement of Spanish affairs by Philip V. retaining the crown. There remained still the difficulty of the Stuart rights in England, but it was then confidently hoped by France, secretly supported by Marlborough, that Queen Anne would name Prince James Stuart as her successor.

St. Cyr, November 30, 1711.

I have no news by this post, madame, and it is perhaps delayed by the inundations from all sides? For a whole month it has rained every day and every night ; but it is of no consequence—we shall apparently have peace.

Here are the passports sent, and the Dutch have begun to change their ideas. Philip V. and his good descendants will reign in Spain. I have always hoped for a miracle in his favour, and it is in consequence of this that we profit by what is happening to him now, and which he deserves much better than we do. Old as I am, I hope to see the King of England also return to his kingdom.

How glorious it is, madame, for our King to have sustained war for ten years against the whole of Europe, to have gone through all the miseries that have happened, to have suffered famine and pestilence that have carried away millions of people, and to see it ended by a peace that gives the crown of Spain to his family, and re-establishes a Catholic King on his throne ! For I should never doubt that this will be the consequence of the peace. The King is enjoying health that makes us hope he will

long profit by the rest that he will have now, and I believe that you are Frenchwoman enough, in spite of all my insults, to make me rejoice at this with you.

They say that the passports which come to us from England will take ten or twelve days more to arrive, and if I am to be believed, our plenipotentiaries will start a quarter of an hour after they have come.

The Dauphine enters keenly into such a cause of joy ; she tastes it to the very utmost. She pictures to herself the Queen's gladness and yours. The day peace is concluded she would like to do something that has never been done before, and that she could only do that once. She has not yet found out what this thing is to be, but in the meanwhile she is going to the *Te Deum* at Notre Dame ; then to dine with the Duchess de Lude in her beautiful, quite new house ; then to the opera and supper with the Prince de Rohan in that magnificent Hôtel de Guise ; then, card-playing and a ball the whole night long ; and as the time of her return will be very much that of my getting up, she has asked to breakfast with me when she comes in. I think, madame, that you would find this a pretty long day, in spite of its pleasures.

. . . Madame de Grancey died almost in Marshal de Villeroy's arms, but very well prepared.* . . .

Versailles, December 28, 1711.

My hopes [of peace] are a little troubled by all that comes to us from the Dutch and the Emperor. We must hope that England will be firm. They say that the Queen [Anne] has begun very well by declaring to her Parliament that peace must be made.

I have put into Marshal de Villeroy's hands all the letters you have honoured me with. I should not have given them to the Duc de Noailles if I had thought there was the least word that could wound any one ; but it seems to me, madame, that you treat no one badly but myself by your reproaches and raillery. Other-

* St. Simon speaks of this lady according to his wont, as "an old plaster cast, who had been beautiful and gay, and could not make up her mind not to be so any longer."

wise there is only praise of your princes and ours. . . . In a word, madame, I have obeyed you, and that is enough for me. For the future I shall burn what [letters] I receive ; but I only kept those others for special reasons in regard to all that took place in Spain before you came here.* . . .

Versailles, January 11, 1712.

. . . It is true, madame, that the Dauphine suffers much in her youth, but I cannot but hope that she will go to great lengths in amusing herself, for she has in herself an inexhaustible source of gaiety, and if we are so happy as to have peace, she will most likely be very happy. Her great gaiety does not prevent her keen sensibility to misfortune ; she has felt deeply for the Catholic King and Queen [Spain] in their uncertain life ; she suffers much on account of her father, and there is not a French woman more bound up than she is with the well-being of this country ; so that there will be no holding her in when all these causes of sorrow are removed. She has good reasons for being happy. She is well married, much beloved by the King and the Dauphin, and is most truly the delight of the Court. A few days ago she had a feverish attack, and the courtiers were all in consternation, crying out at what might be their irreparable loss. The people love her because she allows herself to be easily seen ; she has the sweetest children that one can wish for, less beautiful than your boy, but very sturdy and real pictures, sweet-mannered like herself, and showing much cleverness. It seems to me that this is a very happy condition to be in. If we can form an opinion of the King's life by the present state of his health, we may hope that it will last as long as that of the Marquis de Mancera, as their manner of life is very much the same.† There has been

* Princess des Ursins had asked Madame de Maintenon to send back all her letters, but as they had been in the hands of the Duc de Noailles, who was a great collector, probably copies had been left in France. But from this date of 1711 till 1714, the letters are missing in Bossange.—Geffroy.

† This grand old Spanish gentleman, who lived to be over a hundred, was in his bed when his master, Philip V., was driven from Madrid in 1710. Being brought before the English general Stanhope, who asked him to

nothing cut off from the meals that you know so well ; no change of looks, in the way of walking, and in the whole face, which, as you know, madame, is beyond any other we have ever seen. . . .

I see, not without pain, that Queen Anne has consented to receive Prince Eugène in London. It already alarms me ; but you know, madame, that I am naturally thus inclined.

The bad weather has prevented our going to Marly, but now there is a thaw, which may take us there. The King is a little disgusted at the quantity of people who ask to go there, but the Dauphine would like to have even more, though she would not lodge them so well. She must be excused for paying very little attention to their comfort, because she does not care for it herself, and would willingly agree to put five or six ladies of the palace in her own room. . . . You will hear of a little scene at the Duchess of Berry's, which has given a good deal of pain to Madame [dowager] and the Duchess of Orleans. We must hope for a change in a girl of sixteen. . . .

The "little scene" was a fit of terrible passion and violence to which the Duchess of Berry treated her mother because she would not give her a famous collar of pearls that she wished to have for her own. It was a most unfortunate marriage. There is one more letter to the Duc de Noailles, before the terrible disasters of the next month :—

St. Cyr, January 23, 1712.

The King has long been silent about the Cardinal, which looks to me very suspicious. You know that he is not moved to anger at first, but it becomes stronger upon reflection. I have spoken to M. de Meaux and the *curé* of St. Sulpice about it, to

acknowledge the Austrian archduke as King of Spain, the marquis replied, "I have a great respect for the archduke from the house he belongs to, but I have not lived for more than a century to die in dishonour. There is one God, one faith, and one king, Philip V., who is my king. And now, sir, as I am very weak, pray allow me to go back to my bed."—Geffroy.

urge them to find some expedient for settling or softening these sad matters. Yesterday evening I found that I had not been mistaken in my opinion. The King said to the Dauphin, without having shown me anything [letters], that he must bring the matter to an end with the Cardinal; that he could not bear it any longer; that he thinks he is a Jansenist; that he is the first of his subjects who has made head against him, and that he will speak to him and then break off all intercourse. You may imagine that it was an angry conversation. The Dauphin, on his side, is angry because it is spread about in Paris, and even at Rome, that he is on the Cardinal's side, that he condemns the bishops, and that that party [Jansenists] will find support from him. It seemed to me that he would not put aside the idea of making his opinion public, and would not think it the least derogatory to his great rank. Again, certain obscure people assure me that they know from the subalterns of the Archbishop's palace that the Cardinal is preparing some work in secret that shall satisfy the King, but that he would not go on with it if he thought any one knew of it. I have told no one of this communication, for which I will not guarantee, but I thought that it was part of my duty and friendship for you to impart what is going on and what I am afraid of. It will always be most disadvantageous to the Cardinal to oppose a king who is religious, and who upholds the good cause. . . . I shall never speak of this again, and shall confine myself to my own place, which is to beg of God to bring us peace on all sides.

Into the very midst of these religious troubles burst suddenly that storm of overwhelming disaster upon Louis XIV., by which most men would have been entirely crushed. The Dauphine, with all her bright, gay charm, her loving respect for the King, and her unspeakable fascination even during her wildest impulses, died on the 12th of February. Her husband followed her six days afterwards, and the little Duke of Brittany, who was the joy of all that knew him, on the 8th of March. The three bodies were borne

together to St. Denis. The first letter that follows to Princess des Ursins was written or dictated by Madame de Maintenon, but the second she was obliged to resign entirely to Madame de Caylus.

Versailles, February 7, 1712.

I do not know how I shall find strength, madame, to write to you of all the horrors that surround us. Measles has ravaged Paris. A young man named Vigno, whose high play is known to all the Court, died suddenly; the Chevalier d'Hautefort quickly followed him. M. Gondrin [son-in-law to the Maréchale de Noailles] was buried last evening. His wife has the measles and fever. . . . The Dauphine has an inflammation which has settled painfully between the ear and the jaw. . . . She is in convulsions, and cries out like a woman in labour, and at intervals in the same way. She was bled twice yesterday, and has twice taken opium, and seems just now a little quieter. I am going to see her, and I shall not close up this letter till the latest moment, to give you news of her.

I believe as you do, madame, that affection, gratitude, and courtesy should lead the Catholic King to put entire confidence in the King, his grandfather. This is the best and the shortest way of securing peace. The news that was yesterday brought from England adds more and more to our hope. Queen Anne seems to be well informed. She received Prince Eugene coldly, and it is said that he will not be there long. . . . There is no fear now for the duke's life, but there is no doubt that he will lose one eye.*

Seven o'clock in the evening.

After having taken a fourth dose of opium, bruised and smoked with tobacco, the Dauphine feels a little better. I have just heard that she has been asleep for an hour, and says that she hopes to go to sleep now for a long time. The Duc de la Tremoille has

* The Duke of Berry, while practising firing with the Duc de Bourbon-Condé, had shot him in the eye.—Geffroy.

the measles. He is lodged very near to the Dauphine; but the King will not have him moved, on account of the inflammation of his chest. Madame de Gondrin is still very ill. Madame de la Vrillière has the measles, and here we all are in the midst of the infected air, after having taken flight the whole summer to avoid it. I have a very severe cold, and am so depressed by everything that I see and hear, that I cannot brighten my letter anywhere. . . .

This is Madame de Caylus' letter :—

Marly, February 14, 1712.

How strange and fatal is the event, madame, that brings me once more into communication with you! And what pleasure it would have given me if my aunt had thus commissioned me upon another subject. I could not describe to you the state we are in, nor would I if I could. The fact alone is more than enough to afflict you, well knowing, as I do, the tenderness of your heart, your affection for the King, and your friendship for my aunt. And then there is the Queen's grief, who loses a sister so worthy of her. I do not think I could give them any truer or nobler praise than by thus comparing them together.

Everything is dead here, madame; the life is taken out of everything. That princess animated and charmed us all, and we are still, as it were, senseless and stunned by our loss, which we can only feel daily more and more keenly. One cannot look at the King or think of him without perpetual alarm as to his health. As for my aunt, I can only speak of her to obey the orders she gives me. She is not able to have the honour of writing to you, which you will easily understand. She will speak to M. Clement;* but some of your letters must be lost. You say in your last that you wrote to her for a nurse, and this is the first time she has heard of it. The Dauphin has had two attacks of fever, which looked like a quartan attack, but the third having come on to-night [late] instead of this evening, they do not know

* A famous *accoucheur*.

what to call it. It is apparently a fever of grief, for his state, madame, you can imagine. Neither absence nor silence can make me forget the kindness you have always honoured me with. I am always affectionately and respectfully attached to you.

Madame de Maintenon soon wrote to the princess a short note herself :—

Versailles, February 29, 1712.

I see by the Queen's letters and by yours, madame, how much you felt the accident of the Duke of Berry and the duke. You will hear in their turn of greater disasters, of which it is impossible to give you any particulars. The King's grief is too great; all France is scared. . . . The King [of Spain] loses a saint by losing his brother [February 18]. The Queen is very happy in never having known the Dauphine.* . . . Good-bye, madame. I cannot send you a single particular.

It will be remembered that the Dauphin (Duke of Burgundy) had been accused of leaning towards Jansenism, partly on the grounds of certain papers he had drawn up, but probably chiefly on account of his scrupulously religious and austere life, which had aggravated his father's distaste to a son who was to him a perpetual reproach. Madame de Maintenon alludes to some of these papers, found in the Dauphin's private casket, in the following note to his friend the Duc de Beauvillier :—

St. Cyr, March 15, 1712.

To put your mind at rest, sir, I have taken copies of all your writings, and I send you back everything without exception. Your secret would have been kept, but occasions may arise which make everything known. We have just had sad experience of this. I wanted to have sent back everything of yours and M. de Cambray's [Fénelon], but the King wished to burn them himself.

* The Queen of Spain was quite a child when her sister left Turin.

I own that I much regretted this, for nothing more beautiful or more good*could be written. If the prince we are lamenting had some faults, they were not from his being too timidly advised, or too much flattered. We may say that those who walk in a straight path can never be confounded.

In a letter to the Duc de Noailles in April, 1712, Madame de Maintenon makes use of some remarkable words in regard to the Dauphine :—

Be comforted ; let yourself be led toward God. During my whole life I shall mourn for the Dauphine, but every day I find out things which make me believe that she might have displeased me very much. God has taken her in His mercy.

M. Geffroy has probably unravelled the meaning of these last most weighty words of Madame de Maintenon's letter. Dudos pretends that the Duchess of Burgundy had betrayed France to Savoy during the war, but her letters to her father remain in the archives of Turin to show that there was no trace of such deceit. St. Simon, who almost worshipped the princess, gives a clue by saying that she did not return the passionate love of her husband, and had allowed herself to show favour to Count de Nangis, Madame de Caylus says, at the most by receiving some notes or looks of admiration. At such a Court, and surrounded as she was by incessant admiration and flattery, it is indeed marvellous that this was all that could be said in her disfavour ; but Madame de Maintenon's watchful love was unerring in its judgment, and it was a genuine matter of rejoicing, not of grief, that this bright and beautiful creature was taken away from possible evils.

CHAPTER XXIII.

1712-1713.

DURING July of the year 1712 there is a letter to Princess des Ursins, which alludes to two most stirring and touching events. One was that the King of Spain, in a numerous council of his ministers and grandees, made known to them that he had renounced the crown of France that he might never be called upon to abandon his faithful subjects in Spain.* Madame de Maintenon disapproved of this renunciation. The other was the final leave-taking of Louis XIV. with the Chevalier St. George. The abandonment of the Stuart cause and recognition of Queen Anne was a necessary prelude to the Peace of Utrecht.†

Fontainebleau, July 17, 1712.

We receive none but good news as to the peace, and I see no one who does not think that it will be almost immediately sealed with England, and generally during the year; but all moves so slowly that eager characters have something to suffer. . . .

It gives me no trouble to believe, madame, that what the King [of Spain] has declared at his council made a most heroic and touching scene. Our times have furnished some that would be thought almost too fabulous in a novel.

* Failing the Dauphin of two years old, the King of Spain was the next heir, being the Duke of Burgundy's brother. The account of this council is given by Dangeau.

† The Chevalier St. George retired to Lorraine.

A few days ago I witnessed the King's farewell to His Britannic Majesty. The King spoke to him most admirably of his friendship for him, and the services that he would always render him when he could, and ended by exhorting him to be faithful to his religion and to avoid all innovations upon what could never need addition. A great King is an excellent preacher. The King of England answered upon all these points in the most perfect manner, and commended the Queen, his mother, to the King in a very touching way. This prince is most sensible, and far in advance of his years. The Queen then said everything possible as to their gratitude to the King, and her submission to God's will. She is so sorrowful that the hardest hearts must pity her. . . . The Court is not yet large here. There is a great deal of hunting, and it is the most beautiful weather in the world. I am just the same to you, madame, everywhere, though I wish never to love anything again in this world.

Marshal de Villars, during that same month of July, forced the lines of Denain, took Marchiennes, and saved France. That no means of help might be wanting to his success, Madame de Maintenon wrote to Madame de Pérou at St. Cyr :—

July 24, 1712.

Something is taking place in Flanders of which nothing must be said ; but I beg of you to set all the house praying to-morrow, and to forget nothing yourself, my dear daughter, to obtain of God a happy ending to this miserable campaign.

Cardinal de Noailles could not give up the hope of ultimately winning over Madame de Maintenon to his side, and wrote her another long letter in the autumn, urging his cause rather violently against the Jesuits. Madame de Maintenon's reply is full of dignity, and is thoroughly worthy of her.

St. Cyr, October 9, 1712.

I have received your long letter, monseigneur, and I do not know how to answer it. I am enough interested in the subject not to keep silence, and yet I cannot write what I have had the honour of telling you a hundred times. My heart will not let me make up my mind to flatter you, and my respect will not allow me to express myself with truth.

You are well aware, monseigneur, what the King's religion is, and how far removed he is from putting his hand upon the censer? * But, monseigneur, you both think very differently. You treat this affair of the Jesuits as a spiritual matter, touching your conscience, and for which you must give an account. His Majesty looks upon it as a private matter of revenge upon people whom you think, and who, in fact, have offended you. It is this feeling of revenge that the King wishes you to sacrifice to what is due to him, and to the friendship he has always felt for you; for as to saying that the Jesuits are incapable of hearing confessions, it is not possible, monseigneur, that they could have become so in a moment.

The Jesuits have a great many enemies, and there are many badly disposed people who love strife and division. All these people will applaud you; but good Christians, whether friendly or averse to the Jesuits, will bless you if you make peace, and do away with this cause of pain to the King, and make an end of the scandal. It has lasted so long that we have had time to hear it spoken of, and you are well aware, monseigneur, that you know of good priests and enlightened men who do not think with you. If it is your own opinion that guides you, ought you not to mistrust it in the present circumstances, when you have had so much cause for irritation? If you are following the advice of others, monseigneur, look well into the interests and tempers of those who are advising you.

My frankness, my affection for you, and the wish to see the King delivered from suffering carry me beyond the respect that is due to you. I shall end, therefore, by assuring you of the

* Incensing with flattery.

prayers that you have commanded me, and which I shall offer with all the earnestness I can.

Borne down as she was to the very ground at the loss of the wise and admirable Dauphin, whose excellent life opened such promise for the future, and of her own special and well-beloved child, the Dauphine, with the boy who evidently inherited her character, Madame de Maintenon nevertheless held the reins of her life steadily in hand, and kept her usual keen watch upon all who approached her by word or letter. For some unexplained reason, Princess des Ursins had tried to pay her some renewed court, and thinking to do so by adopting her own ways of life, had spoken to her of learning to spin, and had given Mdlle. d' Aumale the commission to send her a spinning-wheel. But Madame de Maintenon was too far-seeing not to discern the depth of this new fit of industry, and wrote the princess two letters, in which she amusingly refers to it.

January 20, 1713.

And now I have come to that fine passage in your letter, which speaks of spinning. I confess that my imagination refuses to picture you with a distaff beside you. You have every gift but that of handiwork, which does not fit in with the dignity of your figure ! Content yourself, madame, with occupying yourself with the King and Queen and their sweet children, their business, their health, their amusements, the ladies of the palace, the ceremonies, the music ; all of which, it seems to me, ought to furnish enough to fill your day.

Marly, February 27, 1713.

I am very glad, madame, that your illness, which prevented you from writing more fully, has not been long. . . . Most certainly you deserve to live, and you are not useless on earth. I can well understand that you grumble about things sometimes.

It is impossible to wish everything to be in order without falling across those that are out of order. I have often taken the liberty of scolding the Duchess de Lude * because she did not scold enough. But this office would be a more disagreeable duty to you than to most people, for I think you are naturally very sweet tempered.

Mdlle. d'Aumale has shown me the letter you have honoured her with, and is looking about for a spinning-wheel for you. You shall have to the very last point what you have asked for, and nothing more. I am not going to pride myself upon sending you twenty livres worth of wool, as much of silk, and as much of flax. You only want specimens of each, and your work will never go beyond them.

The public affairs in which you are interested—the business of occupying and entertaining their Christian Majesties, the education of two great princes, and the intercourse with so many people who honour you—are worth more, in sight of God and man, than the merit of spinning at your distaff.

. . . There is great talk of Count de Roncy's marriage with Mdlle. de Monaco, and of a son of Marshal Tallard with the third daughter of the Prince de Rohan. There are three daughters. The eldest is rather lame; the second has a very pretty figure, but is determined to be a nun; the third was a very pretty child. They all have that beautiful complexion of Madame de Soubise.

I am well aware, madame, of the comfort of putting on a *corps* [stays], but it cannot be spoken of in France. A beautiful great princess has put an end to them without there being help for it. She has not spoilt her own figure, but she has spoilt a good many others; and there is nothing to be seen now but fat, dumpy women.

As the King of England was leaving France, he wrote the King the most beautiful letter in the world. There never was a better mingling of the terms of respect, gratitude, and submission

* The Duchess de Lude was lady of honour to the Duchess of Burgundy from her very first coming as a child from Turin.

with the dignity of a great king. There is nothing but his restoration that would make me wish to live so long.

The Dauphin came here two days ago, smart, covered with jewels, and the prettiest thing in the world, as I am told, for I was at St. Cyr myself. The Duchess du Maine contributes greatly to the pleasures of Paris by the plays, balls, and masquerades that she is just now giving with great splendour. The marionettes act the siege of Douay, the boasting swagger of M. de Villars, and mention all our officers by name. Everybody goes to see them. M. de Villars has been himself, quite entering into the joke. The Duchess of Berry made them come to Versailles. . . .

Writing in April, 1713, to Princess des Ursins, Madame de Maintenon mentioned the careless way in which Louis XIV. had been attended to as a child. He had given her himself the curious details. As is well known, he began to reign when he was three years and a half old, and said that his governesses amused themselves all day long together, and left him to the care of the ladies' maids. He was accustomed to run into the kitchen and pick up all sorts of odds and ends to eat, and especially if there were omelettes frying, he and his lesser brother, Monsieur [Orleans], used to catch the pieces of egg that fell, and run off to a corner to eat them. Their usual companion was a little girl whose mother was lady's-maid to the ladies' maids. He always called her "Queen Mary," because when they played the old game of "Madame," she took the part of the Queen, while the King was page, valet, or lacquey, and obeyed her orders and brought her what she wanted. Probably these few years of hearty, natural, spontaneous play were of great service to Louis XIV. In her next letters to Princess des Ursins, Madame de Maintenon mentions one or two matters of interest :—

April 29, 1713.

. . . I should like very much to have some society, but there is none for one who occupies a position.* Do you recollect, madame, when you were very young how you envied me because grave people took me away into a corner to tell me their affairs? † I myself was very sorry for it, for I would much rather have been laughing with Mdlle. de Pons ‡ and Mdlle. Martel, who were amusing themselves excessively. Years have not changed my tastes. I like society better than anything, and I cannot have it. . . .

The King was good enough to hold the son of the Duc de Noailles [at the font]. The whole family were gathered, and there never were seen such a number of them, or so many duchesses, who stood all round the King's foot-cloth. I did not see it, for my old age shut itself up at St. Cyr.

Marshal de Villeroy shall not throw your spinning-wheel into the fire; but he says it may very well be that you will yet give us thread to spin. You will have to make him tell us what he means. . . .

Marly, May 31, 1713.

. . . The Duke and Duchess of Berry have honoured me by coming to see me separately. The prince seems to me quite as usual. He is thinner, but all the better for it. The duchess is a little taller, very much bigger, rather paler, looking very well, and exactly fitted to seem beautiful to the people. She talked very well and of good things, and is as witty as can be imagined. She expresses herself *en Mortemart*.§

Every time you praise me for my capacity for educating children, I shall swallow your praises wholesale, for I am truly convinced that I know a great deal about it. I think you are much less at a loss than we are to find a governor [for the princes] from the kind of life you lead. The King, the Queen, and you, madame, ought to do more than half his work; for I think you will not leave your

* Probably she means such a position as her own.

† At the Hôtel d'Albret.

‡ Madame d'Heudicourt.

§ Madame de Montespan's family.

princes so in the hands of their governors as to see them only a quarter of an hour ceremoniously in the week.

We have a very precious Dauphin, and I do not know, under the present circumstances, whether it will be necessary to wait till he is seven years old * to give him men [as masters]. . . .

To-morrow peace is to be declared publicly in Paris. Some of the ladies at Marly are going. The bonfire is to be on Thursday, and the *Te Deum*. . . .

Two letters follow to Princess des Ursins, from the manuscripts in the British Museum, which had never been published till they appeared in M. Geffroy's volumes. Several matters of interest are mentioned; and the last alludes to the extraordinary ambition of the princess in stipulating in the treaty of peace for a separate sovereignty to be created by Philip V. for herself, in the Low Countries. Louis XIV. at first gave assent to this proposal, but, as it (naturally) excited great opposition, it was dropped, and the Treaty of Utrecht was signed without it. But it was not so easy to dispose of Princess des Ursins. She insisted then upon a separate sovereignty in Touraine, and actually ordered a splendid château to be built, under the superintendence of her faithful friend and agent D'Aubigné. Then came her last disgrace, and D'Aubigné kept the château for himself. Chanteloup eventually fell to the Ducs de Choiseul.†

Marly, July 23, 1713.

Yes, madame, I have been to Rambouillet,‡ and spent all the time I was there in bed. I shared none of the amusements, but very much of the noise and riot of the young people, who were not satisfied with amusing themselves all day, but were on the run throughout the night. The King was pleased with the hunting,

* The age of reason.

† Geffroy.

‡ Belonging to the Count de Toulouse.

and has planned a journey [there] for October. The room I am in there is very hot in summer and very cold in the winter. I have tried it already. You can well understand, by this little account, that it does not give me much pleasure to change my quarters. We are, however, going to Fontainebleau, where I have a very beautiful apartment, but subject to the same heat and the same cold, as it has a window the size of the largest arcades, to which there are neither shutters, sashes, nor outside blinds, lest they might spoil the symmetry of the window. My Solidity* has something to suffer, as well as my health, from living with people who only like appearances and lodge themselves like gods. The only comfort one can draw from it—and it is not small—is that there is nothing that puts the King to inconvenience, and that, judging others by himself, he lodges the people that he honours by his visits and friendship just as he lodges himself. . . .

It has been sufficiently shown that whatever the King did, Madame de Maintenon never complained, and always put herself aside; but on some of these occasions, even St. Simon, who could not endure her, bore witness to the extraordinary, almost inconceivable, selfishness of her royal master.

Whatever condition Madame de Maintenon was in (he says), the King went to her at his usual time, and carried out in her room whatever he had planned to do. Even when she was in her bed, and perspiring in great drops, the King, who liked air and was afraid of hot rooms, would be astonished on coming in to find the windows shut. Then he would have them opened, and, though he saw the state she was in, he would not have them shut till he went to supper at ten o'clock.†

In the next letter to Princess des Ursins, Madame de Maintenon says:—

* The name given her by Louis XIV.

† Geffroy; St. Simon, “Mémoires.”

Do not imagine, madame, that I can put outside blinds to my great window. One cannot arrange one's room as one will when the King comes to it every day, and it is necessary to perish with symmetry.

And in the same letter :—

Cardinal de la Trémoille sends word that the constitution is drawn up [the bull *Unigenitus*], that we shall receive it in a week's time, and that he can assure us there is nothing in it to make any change in our liberties [of the French Church]. God grant that the miserable business of the two parties may be brought to an end, even if they should begin again some day ! For we cannot hope that this heresy [Jansenism] should not return.

The Duc de Noailles had gone to his château with his wife, and was there enjoying his well-earned rest. Madame de Maintenon wrote to him there during the autumn :—

October 4, 1713.

. . . Madame de Dangeau and Madame de Lévis started this morning for Paris, intending to go very fast, and arrive in good time for dinner. I have laid a wager that they will go very slowly, get there very late, dying of hunger, and finding that all the family have dined. . . . Cardinal de Noailles has asked that the Assembly should be put off for a week, but the King did not wish it. I do not understand why the Cardinal should have asked for it. There was a rumour that the King had sent to tell Cardinal d'Estrées that he did not wish him to be present at the Assembly, but I have denied the fact. I asked M. d'Antin to give a little musical party this evening. He said he should obey, but that he had never dared to have one without orders, or even to propose it. Timid people are pitiable to me.

To whom are you doing the honours of your château ? Have you any visits on hand ? I thought you were quite alone. Why do you tell me nothing about your oxen ? I should be very sorry to leave this life, if I could be a lady in the country. Embrace

my dear niece. I like to think of her as she is now—a grand lady in her château, with her husband, who has not always been a country gentleman, and who has served [in the army] in his time. She is full of talent, fond of her duties, and busied with good works, and, if I dared, I should say with bringing children into the world ; but I will not vex her. . .

Your master is in perfect health, and your very humble servant is very tired, having spent a sleepless night on account of the noise on all sides.

There exists a pretty little note, which might be called the concentrated essence de Maintenon, which is labelled on the outside by an unknown hand : “Madame de Maintenon wrote this note to Madame Dangeau, with the money sent back that she had won of her at cards.” But Geffroy ascribes the note to another incident. Dangeau says that in that November of 1713, Madame de Maintenon won some special prize at a lottery in her own rooms, which she sent the next day to her old friend, “with a charming note.”

November, 1713.

Pray take it well, madame, that I should make amends for Fortune’s blindness, who declared in my favour yesterday, after the only dispute I ever had with you.

CHAPTER XXIV.

1713-1715.

DURING the February of the year 1714, the young Queen of Spain died at the age of five and twenty. She had been married at thirteen, and had four children.

Madame de Maintenon made yet one more attempt to soften Cardinal de Noailles. It was perfectly true that he was not only "casting a bitterness" over her own life, but was seriously affecting the health of the King.

It was to express my grief, monseigneur, that I asked you if you wished to undermine the King's health, for I am convinced that you would like his days to be prolonged. I have nothing to say as to the rest of your letter ; my ignorance and the respect due to you prevent my answering it. I can only beg of God to enlighten those who are prejudiced ; but, monseigneur, you have the opinion of the Pope and of many other bishops against you, and in that case our own should be doubted by us. I did not wish to say so much on the subject. . . .

During the summer of 1714, Princess des Ursins seems to have given the reins to her overweening ambition. It was evidently not without ground that Madame de Maintenon had told her that people were remarking upon her keeping the King of Spain in the country that he might see nobody but herself. She had in truth so shut up the poor weak

Philip V. after his queen's death, that it was credibly reported that she intended to be his Madame de Maintenon. The princess was then seventy-two, though still handsome and always fascinating, and Philip V. was about thirty. It was beyond even her skill to commend herself as a wife to this still young man, and she therefore resolved to make such a marriage for him as should give him a queen who would be always grateful to her and under her influence. Cardinal Alberoni, who had remained in Spain after the Duke de Vendôme's death, suggested Elizabeth of Parma to the princess, and she despatched her nephew, the Prince de Chalais, to Paris, to ask the consent of Louis XIV. to the marriage. She also wrote to Madame de Maintenon, no doubt urging her cause with her; but she was far too well aware of the princess's character to play with such edged tools, and Prince de Chalais' "mission" fell to the ground.

The next letter is one of forty that were written by Madame de Maintenon to the Abbé Languet de Gergy, *cure* of St. Sulpice, brother to the Bishop of Sens of the same name, from whose interesting memoirs of Madame de Maintenon so much of the earliest and latest parts of this volume are taken. The Church of St. Sulpice, dear to all haunters of Catholic Paris as the focus of good works and the favourite resort of those engaged in them, played a very conspicuous part in the seventeenth century. The parish was in a very poor and densely populated quarter, to which the St. Germain fair yearly attracted all that was most vicious and disorderly in Paris. For thither flocked princes, nobles, the *noblesse de la robe* and students, as well as the most desperate and dangerous tramps, criminals,

and purveyors of vice. Hence the *curés* of St. Sulpice of that time were generally men possessed of an apostolic zeal, capable of kindling it in others. The Abbé Olier, the friend of St. Vincent de Paul, there founded the world-known seminary of St. Sulpice, which has been the continual source of a stream of admirable, self-sacrificing priests. One of this Sulpician community was Godet des Marais, who became Bishop of Chartres, and was so long the guide and friend of Madame de Maintenon. Seeing what men were formed by the community, she became an earnest advocate of the Sulpician priests, and after the bishop's death chose two successive *curés* of St. Sulpice as her confessors. One was Abbé de la Chétardie, the other Abbé Languet de Gergy. She entirely entered into Abbé Olier's plan of raising up a body of self-denying, well-instructed clergy, much recruited from the lower middle classes, in place of the old body of entirely aristocratic priests, whose only merit and claim was often high birth, which many among them degraded by their pride, luxurious habits, and evil-living.

Marly, June 24, 1714.

It is, indeed, sir, my will to have made you *curé* of St. Sulpice, for I shall hope to obtain some of the good that God will work there through you. I shall take the most special interest in it [the parish], and I hope that your holy predecessor [de la Chétardie] will be my guarantee as to the esteem he has taught me to feel for you, and of my love for St. Sulpice. How happy we should be, sir, if sickness only costs us his resignation, and if he might live still some time longer for the Church and his friends! * It is quite right that he should rest now, and that you should work. I beg of you to send me word truthfully of his

* Abbé de la Chétardie died a few days afterwards (Geffroy).

state. Some people tell me he is dying, and others that he may yet live for some time. Does he suffer? Cannot he write at all? You see, sir, that I write to you without ceremony. I beg of you to treat me in the same way, and to write to me.

Madame de Maintenon wrote a very deprecating letter on the subject of Prince de Chalais to Princess des Ursins, to which that haughty dame returned an amusingly disdainful answer. It is a great pity that the chief part of her letters were destroyed, probably by Madame de Maintenon herself, who strove to conciliate her in vain, while telling, from time to time, some very home truths.

Marly, July 9, 1714.

I speak the truth, madame, in assuring you that I am not mistress of my actions in public affairs, and you speak the truth when you think that I do not like them, and that I get out of them whenever it is possible. If you could see me, madame, you would agree that I should do well to hide myself. I can scarcely see at all; my hearing is still worse; I cannot be heard, because the loss of my teeth prevents distinct pronunciation; my memory wanders; I do not recollect the proper names; I mix up one time with another, and our disasters, joined to my age, make me shed tears like all the old women you have ever seen. You can imagine, madame, whether any one in such a condition would wish to be brought forward, and whether it is not a misery to be always on the stage, in a theatre that runs from morning till night. Notwithstanding all this, madame, I should have been enchanted to see M. de Chalais, and to talk of the Catholic King [of Spain], whom I love dearly and disinterestedly. Do you think, madame, that I should not have been glad to know what you do from morning till night, and all the details of your pleasant Court? No one would have believed, however, that I stopped short at this, and would even have related our [imagined] conversations.

. . The intercourse between you and me would certainly not be

insipid, if we told each other all that we think. I should expect very little praise of ourselves, and you would hear plenty of blame for the solitude in which you keep the Catholic King, and your total exclusion of the whole nation that has never given signs of being absolutely undeserving. But of what use would be all these disputes? . . .

You will have heard of our change of chancellors.* This one is my very good friend. He has a good head, and is a most honourable, straightforward man. He is less quick than his predecessor. . . .

Happily Princess des Ursins' reply to this letter escaped destruction. It is charmingly characteristic :—

The portrait you draw of yourself, madame, is not too full of vanity, but it must not be taken to the letter. You can hear what you choose, you can see what you like to see, you can express your opinion or keep silence just as you think it convenient. I have so often had experience of this that it would be my own fault if I were not sure of it.

There is a pleasant little note of this time from Madame de Maintenon to the Duchess de Ventadour, in return for a present she made to the Dames de St. Louis of the last baby-frock the Duke de Brittany had worn. It was probably written from St. Cyr.

August, 1714.

Indeed, my dear duchess, you have the prettiest art of invention as to making presents and for charming these poor women whom people try to convince that there is nothing pleasant in the world! They cannot believe this when they think of you, and they are enchanted at having in their possession a frock that the precious Dauphin has worn. It will always be an honour to this house, and may well redouble the fervour of the prayers that are

* Pontchartrain had asked leave to retire, and Voysin took over the chancellorship as well as keeping the Ministry of War.

offered for him. You have adorned this frock with everything you can, and trimmed it everywhere with point-lace to make it still more valuable. You must let me share their gratitude, and let me flatter myself that some of the pleasure you wished to give was for me. But nothing can add to the affection which you know, madame, I have long felt for you.

There is one more long letter in December to Princess des Ursins, in which are these passages :—

From the way the Queen * [of Spain] is spoken of, she will have something to suffer from His Christian Majesty if she has delicate health, for great princes are accustomed to judge of others by themselves. They say that she is taking with her a confessor and a physician that she wishes to keep. I cannot undertake to tell you all that comes back to us here ; every place through which she passes has its own tale, all quite different, but as they are not worth believing, I do not listen much to them. I shall reserve myself, madame, for what you will say when you have seen her. . . .

They are acting “*Athalie*” to-day at Sceaux. You know how beautiful the play is, and they say that it will be perfectly acted. Some retired actors are to play it with Madame du Maine. La Beauval plays *Athalie* ; Baron, *Mathan* ; M. de Malezieu, the *High Priest* ; Madame du Maine, *Josabeth* ; Le Comte d’Eu, the *Little King*, etc.

To this last piece of information Princess des Ursins replied :—

However good may be the actors who are playing “*Athalie*” at Sceaux, the *High Priest* that I saw at St. Cyr will yet be wanting.

This was Madame de Caylus, of whom, when acting in that play, St. Simon had so raved:

* Elizabeth of Parma.

CHAPTER XXV.

1715.

AND here ends, with a sudden catastrophe, the Spanish career of Princess des Ursins. It will be remembered that Cardinal Alberoni had suggested to her the Princess Elizabeth of Parma as a second wife to the King of Spain, and that the princess acceded, believing that Elizabeth would be ever grateful to her for her elevation. Cardinal Alberoni, however, had quite made up his mind that Princess des Ursins and himself could not agree, as they were both resolved upon undivided power. He had therefore set the young Queen against her, and paved the way with the weak-minded Philip for her disgrace. When Princess des Ursins went to meet the Queen at Quadraque, she accused her of covert insolence in her compliments; and then, bursting out into well-prepared passion, ordered her from the room, had her forcibly conducted to a carriage, and driven beyond the Pyrenees. The King had passed from the rule of the Princess to that of his young wife and Alberoni. The surprise in France at this sudden change was very great, but there had long been a great irritation and disgust at the assumption of the princess, and Louis XIV. would not interfere.*

* Geffroy.

The next letter here given to Princess des Ursins from Madame de Maintenon, has been published only by M. Geffroy from the manuscript in the British Museum :—

Versailles, February 15, 1715.

No, madame, I shall not shut my door to you, and though we have nothing but sad subjects to speak of, I am very impatient to find myself in perfect freedom with you. Let yourself be guided by your friend [de Villeroy]. No one ever had a better, and if he should be believed, madame, you would be upon a pinnacle more honoured and considered than you have ever yet been. Every one is not of the same opinion. I find few things to write because I shall have much to say, for I do not think, madame, that I need make fresh protestations of my sincere and respectful affection. It is a miracle to find you travelling without being inconvenienced. Your courage must support you.

Meanwhile the King of Spain became reconciled to the Duke of Orleans, entirely at Princess des Ursins' expense. They vied with each other in accusing her of having invented intrigues against the Duke of Orleans, and made unmitigated mischief. The weak King was glad to conciliate a prince who would probably be Regent of France, and the Duke of Orleans was pleased at being flattered. Poor Princess des Ursins had but a short interview with the King and Madame de Maintenon at Versailles, and was then forbidden to remain anywhere in France, lest she should encounter the Duke or Duchess of Orleans. She went for a while to Genoa, and finally returned to the universal home of exiles, Rome. There she met with the Chevalier St. George and Queen Mary Beatrice; and attaching herself to them, according to her wont, became their ruling power. It was, as St. Simon says, only "the phantom of a Court and a flavour of affairs," but it seemed

to content her in her latter days. She died in 1722, eighty-seven years old, and full of health, strength, power of intellect, and love of the world.* Princess des Ursins, though she in all things strongly contrasted with Madame de Maintenon, was nevertheless, like her, one of the most remarkable figures of her time.

Madame de Maintenon wrote on the subject to Abbé Languet de Gergy :—

February 24, 1715.

I have just received your letter, sir, of the 21st. I was sure you would be pleased with the King. Nothing can be added to his kindness. He esteems you very greatly. His religion is not external, and whatever happens he will live and die Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman. It will always give me pleasure, sir, if you will communicate what you hear, and I hope that I shall never commit you. The Duke of Orleans is in despair at Madame des Ursins' return. He wishes to go to Paris because he is afraid, if she should come in his way, that he should not be sufficiently master of himself not to insult her, which would be terrible in the King's house. That prince is very badly advised. He looks upon me as his deadly enemy, and thinks that I have prevailed to bring Madame des Ursins here ; and all the while I have been contriving to prevent her even sleeping at Versailles, and to get her out of France as soon as possible. It is thus that people are so often mistaken.

You are very good, sir, to the House of St. Cyr. It flourishes now in great splendour, but there will come a day when it will be much in need of your protection, and I beg you to give it.

I knew St. Joseph † well when Madame de Montespan took

* Geffroy.

† The Convent of St. Joseph in Paris was a community of women supported in great part by Madame de Montespan, and where she retired when she finally left the Court. Young girls of a middle class were brought up there, and taught trades, especially beautiful embroidery and needlework for Church vestments and hangings.—Geffroy.

care of it (for, notwithstanding her irregularities, she loved good works). I do not think there can be anything bad there. They work hard, which is a great preservative. I am delighted that you have so much intercourse with the house ; it seems to me to make it safe.

It is true that Rome, up till now, does not wish for a council. The party [Jansenists] are very much afraid of it. The Cardinal and his supporters seem more obstinate than ever.

What can my influence do with the Cardinal when he stands out against the King, his master, his benefactor, prepossessed even by his esteem and attention for him, who has used every means to recall him, even to his tears and imploring petitions when our princes died ? He resisted all this, and is well pleased with himself for it, for he is unceasingly flattered * on this ground. It is certain that he is shortening the King's life, whose feelings are torn between religion and the rights of his kingdom. Say whatever you like, sir, I shall not gainsay you, but I believe you will speak in vain.

Another letter to Abbé Languet de Gergy spoke of a certain congregation of secular people (not bound by vows), in which the *curé* of St. Sulpice was much interested, and also to a book which was falsely attributed to the superior of the "Missions Étrangères," but was in truth by the Oratorian La Borde, superior of the seminary of St. Magloire. The book was aimed at the bull *Unigenitus*, and made an enormous outcry. The "Temoignage à la Vérité" was first censured by the clergy assembled, and then suppressed by the Parliament. The French *Oratoire*, which had no connection with the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, was, almost from the first, tainted with Jansenism.

St. Cyr, March 24, 1715.

Your letters, sir, are never wearisome to me. I receive them with pleasure, and I read them eagerly. I am delighted to have

* By the Jansenist leaders.

this intercourse with a saint, and I feel as if it rectified all that I have with people who are not saints. The simple truth is that I cannot always answer as quickly as I should like. I should reckon myself too happy, if I could be of service to you in your good works ; but it is certain that the Jesuits govern absolutely [the King], and therefore, in spite of any influence one may have, it is necessary to reckon with them. Two or three days ago, before he [the King] had seen Père le Tellier, he told me that he had ordered everything to be done for St. Thecla that you had asked for. You see how that order has succeeded ; and how can one arrive at throwing light upon the various interests which act upon all who are meddling with the matter ? The procurator-general has always been much opposed to secular communities [congregations]. Some years ago, he drew up a very fine memorial about them, which he presented to the King. I did not fail to take the liberty of contradicting him. He supported the nuns, and attacked the secular congregations, which, it seems to me, are more useful and less burthensome than convents. As long as congregations have not got their patent letters, they give themselves to the works entrusted to them ; but as soon as they obtain them, they think of nothing but of buying land, building, increasing their numbers, and setting up fine houses. But when they do not succeed, it is easy to disperse them. It is not so with convents, and I think there are only too many of them. I should not be surprised if the procurator-general should fail in keeping his word to you, for St. Sulpice is more esteemed than beloved. There is no fault to be found in its doctrine and in its morals, and that is enough to stir up envy. I shall read your letter to the King, because it seems to me very reasonable. It will not be, however, till I have read it again more than once, for great precaution is necessary with the good Father [le Tellier].

It would be a great disaster if the gentlemen of the “ Missions Étrangères ” were really Jansenists, for they hear the confessions of a quantity of people, and more than one would think. I found out one day that M. Tiberge directed Princess de Vaudemont,

who is at Milan, whom he certainly never knew in France, for she left it when quite young. It is very desirable to know if M. Tiberge is the author of "*Temoignage à la Vérité*;" for, if he should be, I do not think he ought to stay in peace in the midst of Paris, with the liberty of writing whatever those gentlemen choose. I am most truly grieved at all that is going on in the Church. Old as I am, I am afraid of seeing irregularity driven to extremes. I sympathize largely also with your difficulties, yet can scarcely give you any help.

CHAPTER XXVI.

1715.

THE hour of Madame de Maintenon's crowning help and support to her royal husband—that which may be said to be the greatest of her good works—was now at hand. In August, 1715, Louis XIV. was attacked by his last illness, and she never left him till he was no longer conscious of her presence.

Languet de Gergy, the Bishop of Soissons, became afterwards Archbishop of Sens, and his "Memoirs of Madame de Maintenon," published for the first time by Lavallée, contain also the most absolutely truthful and touching account of the last days and death of Louis XIV. In this account we see how, faithful to the end, in spite of her age, infirmities, and unspeakable weariness, his admirable wife ministered to him to the last, and as she had most truly showed him the right way to walk, and by every bond of influence hindered him from straying from it in his later years, so she now strove to soothe and soften the way through the valley of the shadow of death.

As soon as Louis XIV. fell ill, Madame de Maintenon left him no more. She even wished to watch beside him through the night; but the King ordered a room to be prepared for her close to his own, where she could lie down during the night while

being at hand to give him her care. She made use of all the time she spent with the King to suggest Christian reflections to sanctify his illness, and prepare himself for whatever end might be planned by God. As soon as she knew that it was dangerous, she did not hesitate to give warning of it to the King, and proposed to him to receive the sacraments of the Church. That prince was neither offended nor alarmed at her words, and thanked her heartily, saying, "There is plenty of time, for I feel well ; but it is always good to be provided with these helps." In fact, he lived for nearly a week after receiving the holy viaticum.

During those last days, as long as he was conscious, the King spent the time in thoughts proper to his salvation ; and besides his confessor, who often suggested acts suitable to his condition, Madame de Maintenon brought to his mind acts of patience, contrition, and submission to God's will. The Prince beheld the approach of death with a truly Christian fortitude, and said to the princesses, his daughters, who were weeping round his bed, "How is this? Did you think I was immortal? Must I not give back to God the tribute of my life which belongs to Him?" He begged the princes and princesses to be always united, and, as he knew that there had been quarrels between two of them, he spoke to them, exhorting them to be reconciled, which they were that day. When he was told that one of his legs was mortifying, he proposed at once that it should be cut off, if it were necessary ; but when he was frankly answered that it would not remedy the evil, as mortification was in the blood, he submitted without disturbance to the end that must therefore be foreseen.

He caused his great-grandson, the Dauphin, to be brought to him to give him his blessing, and then spoke these beautiful words :—

"My dear child, you will soon be king of a great kingdom. What I most strongly lay upon you is never to forget the obligations you owe to God. Remember that you owe to Him everything you are. Try to be at peace with your neighbours. I have been too fond of war ; do not imitate me in that, or in spending

so much money as I have. Always take counsel about everything, and try to know and follow the best way.

“Try all you can to help your people, and do what I have been so unhappy as not to do myself. Never forget your great obligations to Madame de Ventadour.” And, turning to her, he added, “I am much grieved not to be in a state to show you my gratitude.”

He ended by saying to the Dauphin, “My dear child, I give you my blessing with my whole heart,” and kissed him twice with great emotion. A few minutes afterwards, the King again said to the Dauphin “that he must not imitate him in the wrong things he had done;” and, again, “to take notice from the condition in which he now saw him to be, how little all human greatness was worth.”

The young prince, who was only four and a half years old, was more touched than is usual at that age. He wept all that day, and hid himself that he might the more freely shed tears.

The Cardinals de Rohan and de Bissy being together at the Mass that was said in his room, he said to them that “he was satisfied with the zeal they had had for the good cause [against Jansenism], and exhorted them to the same course after his death, and that he had given good orders for their support.” He added that “God knew of his good intention and his earnest desire to establish peace in the Church in France; that he had hoped he had procured it, but it had not been God’s will to give him that satisfaction; that perhaps that great matter would be brought to an end more happily in other hands than his; that, however upright his conduct had been, it might be thought that he had been prejudiced, and had carried his authority too far, and in this way it would be better that another should finish it. He exhorted both the Cardinals to show themselves always as brave as hitherto, and added that he wished to die, as he had lived, in the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion, and that he would sooner lose a hundred lives than these opinions.” The *curé* of Versailles, who was also assisting the King, told him of the

prayers the whole people were making for his recovery. The King replied, "The question is not of my life, but of my salvation, and I beg of you to ask this earnestly for me, for I have confidence in your prayers."

Some time after this, the King sent for the princes and noblemen who were in the next room to come to his bedside, and said to them, "Gentlemen, I have to beg you to forgive me for the bad example I have set you. I have to thank you for the way in which you have served me, and the faithfulness you have always shown me. I am sorry not to be able to do for you everything I could wish. I ask you to be as faithful to my grandson [great-grandson] as you have been to me. I hope that you will promote union;* and if any one shall wander from it, that you will help him to come back. I feel moved myself, and that you too are moved, and I beg your pardon [for distressing them]. Farewell, gentlemen; I reckon upon your bearing me sometimes in memory."

All these words were carefully gathered up by Madame de Maintenon, and immediately afterwards related to Mdle. d'Aumale, who was with her at Versailles; and she took care to write them down as Madame de Maintenon related them. I find it also noted that the King sent for Marshal de Villeroy, and said to him, "Marshal, I am going to give you a fresh proof of my friendship and confidence while I am dying. I make you the Dauphin's governor, which is the most important office after my death. You will learn, by my will, what you must do in regard to the Duc du Maine. I make no doubt that you will serve me after my death as you have during my life. I hope that my nephew [the Duke of Orleans] will treat you with the consideration and confidence that he ought to have for a man whom I have always loved. Farewell, marshal. I hope that you will remember me." The King applied himself with the same fortitude to the arrangements for the ceremonial of his funeral and the Dauphin's mourning, and, while speaking of him, sometimes

* Probably referring to Jansenism.

gave him the name of "King." Hearing this, those present could not repress a shudder, which he saw, and said to them, "Why so? It gives me no pain." And in the same firm voice he said to the Secretary of State, M. de Pontchartrain, "Get a brief drawn up like that for the King my father, without changing anything in it, that my heart may be taken after my death to the Jesuits." His constancy and calm were so great that he said again, "I am the happiest man in the world, for I hope that God has granted my salvation." Another time he said, "We have one only thing to do in this world, which is to gain our salvation; but we work at it too late." He was deeply penetrated with humility, and was often heard to repeat, "O my God, have pity on me according to Thy great mercy!" He made within himself acts of desire of going to Him, and once was heard to say, "O my God, when wilt Thou grant me the grace of being delivered from this miserable life? So long have I desired this, and ask it of Thee with my whole heart." He then fainted and became quite unconscious; but came to himself again, and immediately begged Père le Tellier to give him a general absolution. The Father, hearing him often from time to time murmur the *Pater* and *Ave*, directed his attention specially to those words, "Pray for us now and at the hour of our death," as suitable to his present state. The King repeated them several times, and, calling Madame de Maintenon, said to her, "Yes, now and at the hour of my death." His head became confused a little while afterwards; but when his confessor spoke to him of God, and suggested acts of faith, love, contrition, and hope, he seemed to come to himself. The last words that he was heard to say distinctly were those of the Psalm, "Have mercy upon me, O my God! Come unto my aid; make haste to help me!"

From that moment no one could distinguish anything he said, though he was seen to be praying, and sometimes struck his breast, as is done in saying the *Confiteor*.

Madame de Maintenon was almost always at the King's bedside. In spite of the grief which pierced her, she did not shed

tears before him ; but when she found that she could not keep them from falling, she went away, but soon came back to suggest some pious thought likely to prepare his mind for death ; and when the King was making ready for his last confession, she reminded him to accuse himself of several faults she had observed, and that she was afraid he would forget. And he thanked her for this with great feelings of humility and penitence. At times he desired to be alone with her, or with his confessor, to talk freely about eternity and the mercies God had shown him. He took advantage of one of these intervals with Madame de Maintenon to look over his private caskets, and burn whatever papers were of no use. He made her carefully burn some memorials, which he told her might make ill-will between two ministers if they were seen. He was cheerful enough to laugh over some other papers that would be of no use after his death, and, finding a rosary upon looking into one of his pockets, he gave it to Madame de Maintenon, saying, "This will not be a relic, but, at least, it will be a remembrance."

The King made arrangements for the affairs of State, and everything pertaining to the regency during his successor's minority. He held several conversations with the Duke of Orleans alone, specially about State matters and the conduct to be maintained to preserve the kingdom in peace. At one of these interviews Madame de Maintenon was present, and Mdlle. d'Aumale with her. Those four only were in the room. After having spoken to the Duke of Orleans of several objects pertaining to the country, the King mentioned Madame de Maintenon, and said these words : "My nephew, I recommend Madame de Maintenon to you. You know what consideration and esteem I have entertained for her. She has never given me any but good counsel. I should have done well if I always had followed it. She has been useful to me in everything ; but, above all, in regard to the salvation of my soul. Do everything that she asks you to do for herself, for her relations, and for her friends. She will never encroach upon you. Let her apply to yourself directly for

everything she wants." He added that she was poor, and needed the pension that he paid her, and which he desired the Duke of Orleans to continue to her.

The Duke of Orleans was kneeling beside the bed that he might hear more exactly and receive with greater respect the King's commands. When he heard what the King said as to Madame de Maintenon, he turned towards her, bowing profoundly, as if to assure her of the feelings with which he would regard her, and, indeed, which he already had, as will be seen in the end.

Meanwhile Cardinal de Noailles had not ventured to go to Versailles, and he was grieved at not being able to pay his duty to his master and benefactor. He wrote about this to Madame de Maintenon, who communicated with Cardinal de Rohan the Grand Almoner of France, and the Chancellor Voysin, and they spoke in concert to the King, asking him if he had any feeling against the Cardinal. "No," replied the King; "and if he will come at once, I will embrace him with all my heart, provided that he submits himself to the Pope; for I will live and die as I have lived, Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman." At the same time, he ordered the chancellor to tell him this from him. The chancellor wrote to the Cardinal at once that "he had been witness to the faithful account given to the King by Madame de Maintenon, of the grief suffered by His Eminence at not paying his duty, and even of having reason to fear that some resentment against the Cardinal might remain with His Majesty. That the King had commanded him immediately to write him word that there remained no personal feeling against him either in his heart or in his mind, as His Majesty had made the sacrifice to God of everything regarding his authority in the resistance His Eminence had made to carrying out the King's orders for the reception and publication of the constitution [the bull *Unigenitus* against Jansenism] after it had been accepted by more than one hundred and fifteen bishops of France. That His Majesty would receive him with pleasure, and would feel it a special consolation to die in his

Archbishop's arms." The minister noted the condition, that he should sincerely promise to make his acceptance according to the plan sent to the Duc de Noailles during the preceding month of May. The chancellor added that, if the Cardinal was ready to agree to this condition, he could come immediately ; that he would be received with open arms, and that nothing would give the King keener pleasure ; but so long as he should be of the mind to separate himself from the body of the pastors, neither willing to defer to the authority of the Holy See nor to the example of nearly all the bishops of the kingdom, nor to the King's authority, which His Majesty only put forth on this occasion to support the decision of the Church, His Majesty would not think it right that His Eminence should come to see him, lest he should seem by this last action to authorize His Eminence in his conduct.

A courier was despatched immediately to the Cardinal to take him this answer ; but it had no effect upon his mind, which was too much attached to its own opinion to yield to the most just exhortation of his master.

Meanwhile the King grew weaker, and Madame de Maintenon continued her work as a Christian friend, who, though without hope of his living, wished to see him die with the purest feelings of the love of God and of penitence. The King, thinking himself nearer death than he was, bade adieu to Madame de Maintenon, and said, "There is no one that I regret to leave but you, and we shall soon see one another again." Madame de Maintenon stopped him by bidding him think of God only, and not of her, who was nothing." Another time, when the King saw her there alone, he begged her to forgive him for not having lived well with her, and that he had not made her happy, though he had always loved and esteemed her just the same. He was much moved while saying this, and shed tears. Then he asked if any one were in the room, and Madame de Maintenon assured him there was no one. Then he said, "If any one should hear of my being so moved with you, he would not be surprised." In spite of all her efforts, the tears streamed from Madame de Maintenon's

eyes, and she went away that the King might not be excited again and injure himself. Another time the King said to her, "What will become of you? You have nothing." Madame de Maintenon said, with the same disinterestedness, modesty, and generosity which she had shown in the most brilliant moments of her life, and without anxiety for the future, "I am nothing ; pray occupy yourself with God alone." But when the King pressed her, she asked him to commend her to the Duke of Orleans, which the King did soon afterwards, as has been related.

The last day that she saw the King was on Thursday, the 29th of August. The King drew towards his end, and it was thought that he could not live beyond that day, though he was fully conscious. He conversed with his confessor, and responded to the acts that he suggested. Casting his eyes upon Madame de Maintenon, he said, "I admire your courage and your friendship in being here always and looking on at so sad a sight." But as that very day the King entirely lost consciousness, and it was even believed that his agony had begun, Madame de Maintenon thought of going away. She had sent for M. Briderey, her confessor, and had begged him to examine what state the King was in, and to tell her if he were yet able to receive any help from her. The pious missionary having told her that her presence could not thenceforth be of the slightest use, Madame de Maintenon left the palace and set out at once for St. Cyr. The King, however, remained for two days in the same state, . . . but it was observed that he never ceased saying prayers to himself. At last this great prince expired on Sunday morning, the 1st of September, aged seventy-seven years.

CHAPTER XXVII.

1715-1716.

MUCH has been said by the enemies of Madame de Maintenon as to her "desertion" of the King on his death-bed, and at first sight it does seem strange that she could have made up her mind to leave that bedside while there was the faintest possibility of his recognizing her presence. But as it was not in Madame de Maintenon to give way to weakness, fatigue, or suffering while the least good to others was to be gained by it, so it also belonged to her not to indulge feeling when no essential benefit to others was to be obtained. Having done the very utmost to guide and sustain the King in that long preparation, going with him literally step by step down into the dread valley of death, now that he could no longer be sustained, her active faith reverted to the next help possible to be given, which were prayers for the agonizing and the dead. As she got into the coach with her faithful companion, Mdlle. d'Aumale, she said to her, "My grief is great indeed, but it is a softened and tranquil grief. I weep, but they are sweet tears, for I feel a great joy in my heart for the King's Christian death. I have already offered my thanksgiving for it to God ; I have never asked for him to live during his illness ; I have only begged for his salvation." Then, as they were on the

road, she said, "We are now going to weep for him and labour to hasten his glory in Heaven by our prayers, and then we must think only about our own salvation and doing some good works." *

It must be remembered, also, that Madame de Maintenon's position was by no means ascertained and assured then, as it is now. The Duke of Orleans had, it is true, shown her courtesy beside the dying King, but hitherto he had been no friend to her. He well knew how she had looked upon his evil life and intrigues. There was a large party at the Court, represented by the cynical, malignant St. Simon, who had always detested her influence with Louis XIV., and had striven in every underhand way to blacken her name and her motives. The Duchess Dowager of Orleans and the Duchess de Bourbon-Condé hated her position, her goodness, her influence, and, above all, her unspotted life. The ecclesiastical party adhering to the Cardinal-Archbishop were deeply irritated at her steady resistance to Jansenism, and repeated everywhere the false cry that she was bound hand and foot by the Jesuits, from whom, as we know, she had stood aloof, though always with respect. By remaining longer at Versailles in the uncertain position in which the King's death left her as his unacknowledged wife, she might have been subjected to insult, and not impossibly to some risk of her life.

She was even so alive to some such danger that she spoke of it to her faithful and most noble friend, Marshal de Villeroy, who immediately had the royal guards posted along the road at certain distances between Versailles and St. Cyr, and lent Madame de Maintenon his own coach in

* Languet de Gergy ; Lavallée.

which to make the journey. Happily for the reputation of all whom it involved, Madame de Maintenon was completely unmolested, and the people of Versailles paid her every respect.

As soon as they came towards St. Cyr, Madame de Maintenon said, sighing, "This house is losing both its father and mother, for I shall be quite useless to it now, after having been able to do everything for it." Marshal de Villeroy sent a messenger every hour to St. Cyr with the account of the King, so that if there had been the least need of her she could have returned to Versailles. The whole of Sunday she spent in tears and prayers, which the whole house, down to the least of the little girls, fully shared. Madame de Maintenon had sent for the children as soon as she arrived, and spoke to them all; after which she said, "I hope I shall see you by-and-by without all this emotion, my dear children, but to-day it is impossible to be otherwise." A few hours afterwards she said to the Dames, "All the rest of life must be devoted to inspiring our girls with the same solid piety that he had for whom we are now lamenting." *

On the Sunday morning, no one dared to tell her that the King was dead. Mdlle. d'Aumale only told her that the whole household were praying in the chapel, and she understood the reason and went to the church, where she assisted at the reciting of the Office for the Dead, and thenceforth only thought of sanctifying her grief by prayer. Meanwhile she was almost entirely without money, and did not know in the least how she should be treated by the Regent; but she thought of this only as tending towards

* Languet de Gergy.

her sanctification and eternal welfare, and had not the slightest anxiety as to her future lot.

The Bishop of Chartres* and the Archbishop of Rouen† arrived at St. Cyr soon after the King's death, with Madame de Maintenon's confessor, M. Briderey. She sent for them to her room, and, kneeling down, asked the Bishop of Chartres for his blessing, saying, "I put myself into your hands as my superior, and in your hands [as her bishop] I shall probably die." The bishop, who was a young man, was so pained by seeing this venerable lady of eighty years old kneeling at his feet, that he would not give her his blessing till urged by the Archbishop of Rouen. Then he raised her up, and they talked for some time, all shedding tears at the irreparable loss sustained by the kingdom, by religion, and by this House of St. Cyr.

On the 8th of September, the Duke of Orleans went to St. Cyr, and behaved very well to Madame de Maintenon, making on that occasion the often-noted remark that "she had done all the good she could to everybody, and never wronged any one." He had already sent her word that the pension paid her by Louis XIV. would be continued to her, which was the modest sum of four thousand livres a month. On arriving at St. Cyr, he went immediately to Madame de Maintenon's room, where he found her on her bed, quite worn out. As soon as he had left, she told Mdlle. d'Aumale the whole conversation, who recorded it in her usual exact way :—

He told me that he had taken measures for my being paid exactly what the King gave me from his budget. . . . I thanked him very humbly, said that it was too much in the present state

* De Mérinville, nephew of Godet des Marais.

† D'Aubigné.

of the finances, and that I had never wished for so much. He replied that it was only a trifle, but that it was true the finances were in a bad state. I said that what he gave me would be used for obtaining prayers for him that God might give him the help he needed. He replied that he began already to feel the burden of the load he carried. I told him he would soon feel it much more. He said he would be at Vincennes* as often as he could, but that business called him much to Paris; that he was going to do everything possible to put them right, which was his only ambition, and that he should think himself too happy if in a few years' time he could give up the kingdom to the young King in a better condition than it was now. I said that this was a very glorious aim. He told me that no one had so much interest as himself in the preservation of the young prince; that he himself now had all authority, and that he should be delighted to make it over to him, to enjoy then the rest and honours which he should have gained. I replied that if he had not the insatiable desire of ruling of which he had always been accused, that which he planned was a hundred times more glorious. He answered that if they should lose the young King he could not reign in peace, and there would be war with Spain. I begged him not to listen to anything that might be imputed to me on his account; that I was aware of men's malice; that I had not a word to say ever again [on public matters]; that I only intended to shut myself up, and that the obligation I was under for his benefits must of itself bind me in honour never to do or say anything against him; that I might still be accused of interference as to Spain, that it would be entirely false, and that I should never think of public affairs except to pray for the welfare of France.

He renewed all kinds of protestations as to myself and St. Cyr, and bade me always to apply to him directly. I replied that my most earnest petitions would be to have the foundation of St. Cyr finished.

Then he asked to see the Dames in the community-room, and

* Versailles ?

said to them, "I have asked to see you, mesdames, to assure you of my continual protection. I have nothing to say that would convince you of this ; it is enough that the King has recommended you. I know the value of your house, useful as it is to the nobles and the kingdom. Whatever you wish for, mesdames, and whatever Madame de Maintenon may wish, you can apply to me for, and I shall always be ready to render you any service in my power, and this I am now come to assure you. I commend myself to your prayers, that God may give me the strength and light needed to bear the terrible burden that is laid upon me."

When the Regent had left, Madame de Maintenon related to the Dames, who had been in anxiety as to her pension, that he had secured it to her, and that if anything now could comfort her, it was the thought of being still able to help the poor, and especially the poor nobles.*

Two letters, or rather a note and a letter, the last ever written to Princess des Ursins, of which the manuscripts are in the British Museum,* are here given together :—

Marly, September 11, 1715.

You are very good, madame, to have thought of me in the great event which has happened. There is nothing to be done but to bow one's head to the Hand that has struck us.

I wish with my whole heart, madame, that your condition were as happy as mine. I have seen the King die like a saint and like a hero. I have left the world which I did not love, and I am in the pleasantest retreat that I could wish for. And wherever I am, madame, I shall be all my life, with the respect and affection that I owe you, your very humble and very obedient servant.

St. Cyr, December 27, 1715.

It is true, madame, that I keep myself as far as possible from the world, and if my friends were less good to me, I should never

* Languet de Gergy ; Lavallée.

* These letters have been published only by M. Geffroy.

see any one. But it is also true that I do not forget those whom I have esteemed, loved, and honoured, and that I often think of you, wishing for you what I believe to be best. I should have thought, madame, that you would go to Rome, and I was very glad of that on account of your eyes. My own eyes have had a very different lot. I have left off spectacles, and I am working tapestry day and night, for I sleep little. My retreat is peaceful and complete. As to society, it is impossible to have that with people who have no knowledge of what I have seen, and who know only the rules of this house in which they have been brought up.

There is no state on earth, madame, that has not its sufferings, but your strong mind, your courage, and your sweet disposition have always lessened yours. I scarcely ever see our marshal [de Villeroy] but he does something for me every day of his life. He is the refuge of all the miserable. You would be glad to hear the public talk of his worth, and I know people who do not like him, who are yet unable to deny that he fills a great place [in life]. . . .

The Parliament of France annulled the will of Louis XIV., and both the Duc du Maine and Marshal de Villeroy were deprived of the positions and consideration that he had planned for them. Madame de Maintenon alludes to this in her letter to Marshal de Villeroy, from which one or two passages are given:—

Paris, January 5, 1716.

. . . May God grant that the prince [the King] may continue in those ideas of religion and justice which you speak of as discernible in him! He would gain much in all ways. . . . Let us admit, after fully satisfying what is due to Princess des Ursins, that she is too frivolous for her position and her age. I never ask any particulars about the Chevalier de St. George, but only generally if his affairs go ill or well. . . .

I wish with my whole heart, sir, that I could gainsay you when

you complain, and find any ground of consolation, but I admit that I think you are very unfortunate, and that there is no remedy, or, at least, the remedy is very far off. I have not at all a pleasant idea of your conversations with M. du Maine, whose condition is still worse than yours. These thoughts often disturb the repose of my retreat. The more one reflects upon the state of France the more one hopes that the young King will live, and it is not the enemies of the Duke of Orleans who desire this. . . . It is true, sir, that it is not becoming for me to receive visits, but I assure you with equal sincerity that it annoys me not to have the honour of seeing you, and I am very sorry it is impossible.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1717.

IN the next letter to Madame de Dangeau, nearly a year afterwards, Madame de Maintenon seems to have regained her old cheerfulness, and writes with even more than her usual affectionate unreserve :—

January 14, 1717.

I cannot tell you, madame, how touched I am by your letter ; it is full of friendship and good sense. . . . I cannot be content to have you in the house and not to see you, and as soon as you have even opened the door I do not want to lose a moment of the time you can give me. While you are here, my prayers will not be without distractions, and if I were obliged, on account of my weakness, not to say a word, I should still listen to you with pleasure. You are too humble, madame, if you think my head better than your own. I do not know any one so solid as you are, and if you mingle some raillery with the sense it is only an added charm. But there is nothing frivolous in your conduct, nor superficial in your goodness ; the only fault I find is that it is a little too austere for yourself and for those whom you love. We will talk of this at your first visit, but I beg of you not to let it be till the first days of Lent. The weather will be finer, and the night will not come so quickly to separate us. Lose no opportunity, madame, of persuading our friends to look upon me as no longer existing. I should be much grieved if they obliged me to refuse their coming here. . . . Nothing seems harder to me in my

retirement than not to live with you any longer, madame, and nothing has ever been more flattering to me than the liking I have always felt that you have for me. God knows where we feel the most, and it is exactly there that He often touches us, and we must submit. Yesterday I had all the d'Aubigné family; they are still scared by the danger that poor woman [Madame d'Aubigné] has been in. I wish she could see some sensible woman and would dress her head as you do. She came here a few days ago in a little cap which made her look quite ridiculous. She is not suited to wear a headdress like a mad woman, but in other ways she is what can be desired to her family. . . . Good-bye, you most sweet, most estimable, most respected [friend] there is in the world. This is not the most intelligent way of saying it, but it is the depth of my heart. . . .

There is one last letter to Marshal de Villeroy which touches upon the fatal weakness of the Regent in regard to the Jansenist party, who immediately began to feel the difference of the hands that held the reins. Madame de Maintenon also alludes to the ironical chances which had brought Cardinal del Guidice and Princess des Ursins face to face in Rome. The Cardinal had considerably helped Alberoni in the matter of the princess's dismissal, but afterwards was disgraced and dismissed himself from Spain, when he also took refuge in Rome.

February 20, 1717.

It seems, sir, that neither attention to business nor weariness of body and mind can prevent you from giving me tokens of the honour of your friendship, and I perceive, by one word in your letter, that there are even some fresh troubles. This gives me cause to wish that you would come and visit me, in spite of my prudence, for I shall be uneasy till I know what they are.

I have never had any hopes from Cardinal de Noailles, but you cannot think how I pity the Regent. It is evident that he

earnestly and sincerely wishes for the peace of the Church, and he cannot obtain this without declaring himself for the good cause. Then he would soon see those difficulties, which are now daily increasing, come to nothing; for the liberties of the Church are made the pretext, and our King showed on many occasions that he was as jealous for them as it was right to be. M. Voysin had well cleared up this, though he, like others, was prejudiced when he entered into these matters.

Princess des Ursins' letter has given me a little pleasure, sir. She seems to be tolerably happy, which I hoped she would be. Between ourselves, I should be happier than I am myself if I had any society; but that cannot be here, and, however clever a nun may be, she has no knowledge of what has occupied us all our lives. Cardinal del Guidice's adventures are now complete, and if they meet one another, their talk would be good to hear. . . .

In a letter of the same year, or rather fragment of a journal, to Madame de Caylus a sufficiently startling announcement is made by Madame de Maintenon of a visit from Peter the Great, who was certainly a strange ingredient in the daily life at St. Cyr, and among the polished dukes and marshals of her courtly life. The account of it is quite unique.

June 11, 1717.

I am sending for news of you, my dear niece, and of your good friends. I have nothing to say about ourselves, for I see no one. M. Gaudry has just told me that the Czar carries a woman about with him, to the great scandal of Versailles, Trianon, and Marly. I cannot believe this tale. . . . M. Gabriel has just come in, saying that M. Bellegarde sends me word that, if I think well of it, he—that is to say, the Czar—wishes to come here to-day after dinner. I dared not say no, and I am going to receive him on my bed. They tell me nothing more, and I do not know if

I ought to go and receive him with ceremony, if he will like to see the house, the young ladies, go into the chapel, etc. I leave it all to chance.

The Czar came at seven o'clock, and sat down at the head of my bed. He caused me to be asked [by the interpreter] if I were ill, and I answered, "Yes." He asked what was the matter with me, and I answered, "Very great age and a weak constitution." He did not know what to say, and his interpreter did not seem to understand me. His visit was very short. He is still in the house, but I do not know where. Good-night, my dear niece. I am just going to take my milk. . . . I forgot to tell you that the Czar had the foot of my bed opened [the curtains] that he might see me. You will believe that he must have been pleased.

Marshal de Villeroy paid his last visit, probably, at the end of that year, and Madame de Maintenon's last letter was to Madame de Dangeau ; but the last but one, being more characteristic, is given here :—

I renew willingly the intercourse you wish to have with me, madame, although my part in it cannot be but tiresome to you. You are at the source of all that is going on in the world, and I see nothing but my needlework. There are two things that have remained in my mind since our last conversation. I am afraid, madame, that you may discourage M. de Dangeau. You are austere, and you do not enter into the force of habit. I have seen Madame de Montchevreuil in anxieties like yours. She drove her husband to despair by the bitterness of her piety. She came here and was directed by a very good man, and I recollect that she sent me this message one evening : "What will you say to me ? To-morrow is Easter Day, and I shall spend the evening in playing backgammon with M. de Montchevreuil." Everybody is not capable of the recollection, madame, that you insist upon, and you ought to be satisfied with a man who has faith, who has not a vice, and who is naturally good and not weak.

CHAPTER XXIX.

1717-1719.

MADAME DE MAINTENON had some time since disposed of her men-servants, and when she dismissed them she thanked them all for their faithful service, and shared among them a good deal of her furniture, linen, and various useful things. She had been persuaded at first to keep her coach that she might get some air, but she said, soon afterwards, "I cannot be giving food to horses while so many nobles are dying of hunger." The horses and coach, therefore, followed the rest of her goods. She kept two maids and a young man to go out on errands, etc. She cut down her table to one dish, and instead of the former regular supper with meat, she had for some time taken only a cup of chocolate. But as soon as she was settled at St. Cyr, even the chocolate was cut off, and at dinner she insisted upon sharing whatever was cooked for the house. And although, as foundress, her lodging and food had been expressly arranged for by Louis XIV., Madame de Maintenon paid the nuns a munificent pension as long as she lived, "lest she should be a burden to the house."

Soon after her retirement to her beloved House of St. Louis, Madame de Glapion was elected superior, which

was a real joy to Madame de Maintenon. She put herself into her hands as one of the community, obedient to the letter, and punctual to all the offices like the Dames themselves. When not in the chapel, she employed herself in the class-rooms, looking over the girls' exercises, examining their work, instructing them, and hearing their lessons. When she was no longer able to go to the class-rooms, she asked leave for the girls to go to her room to be taught reading, writing, needlework, and catechism. She attached herself also to the novices, with whom her great experience was of signal use, and they were allowed to go singly to her room to talk of their duties, their difficulties, and the meaning of their vows.* It is on record from enlightened and learned ecclesiastical testimony that this widowed lady, who had spent nearly all her life at the most brilliant and dissipated Court in Europe, thoroughly understood conventual life, and shed a flood of light upon the obligations of poverty, chastity, and obedience that guided a number of women on their spiritual way.

But Madame de Maintenon's chosen pleasure was having the youngest of the little girls in her room, and teaching or hearing them taught by Mdlle. d'Aumale. The least of these was Mdlle. de la Tour, who went to St. Cyr at six years old. She was mentioned in Madame de Maintenon's will, and died a Dame de St. Louis.

These were the after-dinner occupations, but Madame de Maintenon spent many hours in the chapel. She got up at six o'clock for the first Mass, then dressed, when the New Testament or the Psalms of the Office were read aloud to her, and then went back to the church for a

* Languet de Gergy ; Lavallée.

second Mass. At four o'clock she went again to the chapel, and remained till six. One day in each month was spent in retreat, to "sift her soul," and prepare herself for death. One of the community once wished her a long life, because she was so necessary to such a number of people. To this Madame de Maintenon replied, "If I am necessary, well and good; if not, the sooner I die the better."

Her last letter to Madame de Dangeau speaks of the fever which consumed her. It was dated February 9, 1719.

The fever continued and increased, with a renewal of violent cough and cold, and Madame de Maintenon clearly discerned that this sickness would be her last. She told the Duc de Noailles her conviction, for, after the death of Voysin, he had obtained permission of the Regent to take his place as temporal guardian of St. Cyr.

The Bishop of Chartres had ordered Mass to be said in Madame de Maintenon's room when she became too feeble to go to the chapel, and, as far as she was able, she continued all her usual devotions in her bed. She humbly begged pardon of the superior and Dames de St. Louis, and even of the lay-sisters, for the trouble she was giving them, exactly as if she had been an object of their charity. When the weather became again excessively cold, she at once had inquiries made and sent out money to buy fuel for the poor.

At Easter, Madame de Maintenon made her Communion in bed, and grieved exceedingly that she was not able to assist at the public services. She thought of the little sums she was accustomed to pay to deserving people,

and made Mdlle. d'Aumale pay them in advance. She sent for her writing-case, looked over her will, and resealed it, writing with her own hand on the cover, and playfully remarked upon the little she had to leave behind her.

On the 14th of April, she seemed to rally so much that the whole house was in rejoicing at her recovery. Her colour returned, she was gay and bright, and those who saw her showed their joy. "Yes," she said, "I am better, but I am still going." One of the Dames brought her a letter, and she thanked her, saying, "That is done with, my daughter ; I am going away."

Towards evening, a violent thunderstorm came on, and affected Madame de Maintenon so much that at midnight the priest was sent for to give her the viaticum, after which she became unconscious. But the next morning, when she was told that she was to receive extreme unction, she came to herself immediately, and said, "Is there nothing to prepare by my bed?" And once again, "I have a great devotion to extreme unction." She received it with the greatest fervour, gathering up all her strength for this last supreme act, and answering all the prayers most fervently. Then her confessor asked her to give a blessing to all her daughters, and she replied, "I am not worthy ;" but as he urged it, she obediently lifted up her hand in the attitude of blessing, no longer able to utter a word. She was quite unconscious thenceforward, and tranquilly passed away at dawn, without the slightest change or movement, and as if in a calm sleep.*

She was then eighty-four years old, and had survived Louis XIV. nearly four years.

* Languet de Gergy.

For two days, the body of Madame de Maintenon lay on her bed, still as if in the sweetest sleep, and on the 17th it was buried in the nuns' choir. She had begged to be allowed to rest in the common cemetery of the convent, but the Dames would not consent to their foundress being so interred.

The Duc de Noailles then opened the will and administered it, and took all the funeral arrangements upon himself. The Bishop of Chartres, the General of the Lazarists, and all the Lazarist Fathers in the neighbourhood, to the number of forty, gathered to the funeral, and recited the whole Office for the burial ; for the poor Dames de St. Louis could do nothing but weep and sob, and were not able to utter a single note.*

The next day, an immense concourse of people came to the Mass for the Dead, when the same number of priests were present. Throughout the solemn chants of the ceremony a strange undertone of stifled sobs and weeping was heard, and this living testimony of genuine sorrow was the one single pomp that celebrated the death of Françoise d'Aubigné de Maintenon.

A vast epitaph, in the sumptuous language of the time, was drawn up by Vertot himself, and remains a monument of that special form of French which can so poorly be transferred to English that it is given in its original form. It will be observed that, notwithstanding its sounding array of epithets and attributes, there is not a single acknowledgment that Madame de Maintenon was the King's wife. She had carried out to the end her own

* Languet de Gergy.

words : " I have spared others, but I have never spared myself." She had shielded others from difficulties and pain, but at the cost of taking all the difficulties and pain upon herself. The final rescue of Louis XIV. in his downward course and her incessant toil for what she believed to be the good of France remained her only rewards.

Whatever interpretation may be put upon the value of her work or upon the issues that it raised, it is at least due to her that the motives with which it was carried out to the end should be appreciated, and that a just estimate should be formed of the character and true position of Madame de Maintenon.

This is the epitaph :—

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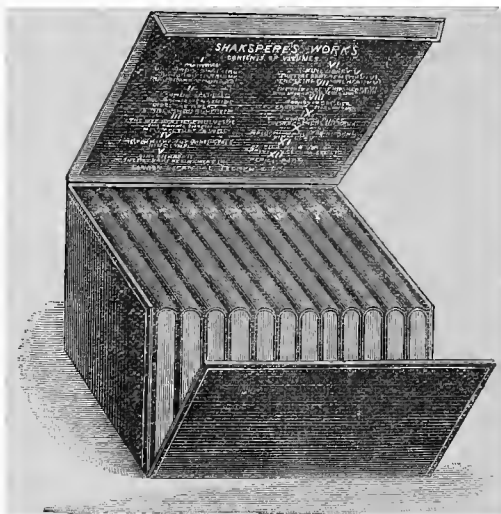
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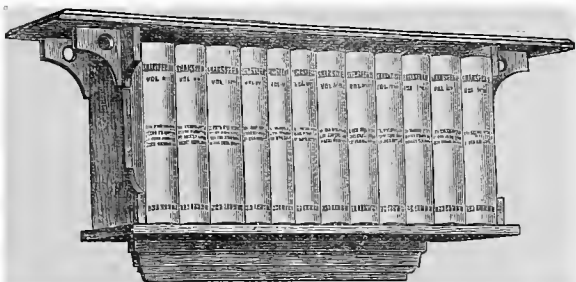
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Salar. My wind, cooling my broth,
Would blow me to an ague, when I thought
What harm a wind too great might do at sea.
I should not see the sandy hour-glass run
But I should think of shallows and of flats,
And see my wealthy Andrew, dock'd in sand,
Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs
To kiss her burial. Should I go to church
And see the holy edifice of stone,
And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,
Which touching but my gentle vessel's side,
Would scatter all her spices on the stream,
Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks,
And, in a word, but even now worth this,
And now worth nothing? Shall I have the thought
To think on this, and shall I lack the thought
That such a thing bechanc'd would make me sad?
But tell not me : I know Antonio
Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

Ant. Believe me, no : I thank my fortune for it,
My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,
Nor to one place ; nor is my whole estate
Upon the fortune of this present year :
Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.

Salar. Why, then you are in love.

Ant.

Fie, fie !

Salar. Not in love neither ? Then let us say you
are sad,

Because you are not merry ; and 'twere as easy
For you to laugh, and leap, and say you are merry,
Because you are not sad. Now, by two-headed
Janus,

Nature hath fram'd strange fellows in her time :
Some that will evermore peep through their eyes
And laugh like parrots at a bag-piper ;
And other of such vinegar aspect

